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# Current Trends in Rural Public Library Service

JOHN M. HOULAHAN  
*Issue Editor*

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Introduction

JOHN M. HOULAHAN

Rural public library service is a distinct, important, and complex problem that affects large segments of the United States population but has lacked the attention and examination of the library community. Allie Beth Martin wrote in 1972, "Rural public library service has been largely overshadowed by urban-suburban crises in recent years." Three-quarters of a decade later, rural librarians and rural public library service are still being neglected and overlooked by scholars and decision-makers, and the national library press and literature. This issue of Library Trends, in its examination of rural public library service, is an attempt to correct this neglect.

Rural public library service is not a distinctive and independent system any more than urban and rural society act as separate entities: "The village community by definition has never been a totally isolated entity but a part, however remote, of the national state." Similarly, the rural public library has been a part of and influenced by the national library community. And like the rural village, it is witnessing a decline in its autonomy as it becomes more and more a part of the national scene. This development has come about as the local rural library has increasingly come under the influence of county, regional, state, and network systems. DeGruyter's chapter on the history and development of the rural library reviews the growing influence that county, regional and statewide services have had on the rural library, while DeJohn discusses the impact of networking.

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While rural public library service is not perceived as a separate and distinctive library system, it does, however, have unique and specific problems due to its setting which are valid units of study and analysis. Ann Drennan and Anne Shelby wrote, “Significant differences exist between urban and rural areas—in lifestyles, attitudes, and values, in information needs and in delivery system needs.” Twenty-three distinct economical, political, and sociological areas were cited by the authors as examples.

Central to the rural and urban dichotomy is geographical remoteness. “Geographic remoteness means a different way of obtaining information,...lack of knowledge of and access to social service agencies, ...remoteness from adequate education,...from traditional methods of continuing education,...from information for rural businesses,...from a variety of leisure activities,...from special services for young children,... from choice of mass media.”

In addition to geographical remoteness, other concerns which need to be addressed when designing, providing and delivering rural library services include low population size, population density, transportation, and poverty and educational levels. Ann and Henry Drennan further explain rural uniqueness in this issue’s leading chapter.

In the Drennans’ article, as is the case in each of the chapters, the authors have tried to answer the problem of defining the term rural. This may not be unlike the six blind men and the elephant. Whichever part of the rural problem one grabs hold of may determine that writer’s perception of the beast. Thus, the issue’s authors offer a variety of definitions and descriptions for rural. As an example, the Drennans distinguished concepts of rural, substantially rural and remote. Weech in his chapter on standards identifies the three traditional rural definitions generally followed by the library community. Fry, Lange, and Curran and Barron use the traditional definitions, while the other authors in this issue either qualified them or offered alternatives.

Defining rural public library service offers the same potential for diversity of opinions as defining rural. For this issue of Library Trends, rural public library service is defined simply as public library service conducted in a rural setting.

Rural public library service is often incorrectly perceived as simply a farm problem of only regional importance, which will simply disappear as rural populations decrease. But, in fact, it is not just a regional farm problem but a national concern that affects a wide representation of Americans, from the farmer in the Midwest to the fisherman off the New England coast, to the miners in Appalachia, to the textile workers...
Introduction

in the Southeast, to the retirees in the Southwest, to the timber workers in the Great Northwest.

The belief that the rural problem is lessening and is becoming indistinguishable from urban problems can be attributed in part to a decreasing farm population. Farm population, estimated at 32 million between 1910 and 1920, had fallen to about 9 million in 1975. Also decreasing in population nationwide is the very small town of 500 population or less. However, what is not often recognized is that cities of 500-2500 have been increasing in population at a rate higher than the national average. Additionally, although rural population as a percentage of the total U.S. population has dropped from a high of 95 percent in 1790 to 26.5 percent in 1970, the rural population in real numbers has remained fairly stable at 54 million for the past quarter-century.

Rural population has remained relatively stable but its makeup is changing from farm-dominated to mining, timber, fishing, and manufacturing. And yet, library planners may be using out-of-date perceptions and stereotypes of the rural community.

In this issue's chapter on information services, Vavrek cautions his readers to "first acknowledge the realities of library service in the [rural public] library" and then deal practically with it, thereby describing the aims of this issue. Articles here were commissioned to examine the long-overlooked and changing realities of rural public library service. A second purpose is to describe the distinctive, important, and complex problems confronting rural libraries, and third, to identify areas for further study.

These goals are accomplished in the descriptions of its people by Drennan and Drennan, its services and programs by both McCallan and Vavrek, its myths by Curran and Barron, its standards by Weech, its governance by Lange, its operations by Fry, its history by deGruyter, and its future by DeJohn.

References

4. Ibid., pp. 172-76.
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6. Ibid., p. 43.
7. Ibid., p. 45.
8. Ibid., p. 6.
A COUNTRY THAT WAS characterized by urbanization even before its formation as a nation, the United States has continued its transformation from a rural to an urban society. Now, almost unnoticed, there is the countercurrent population shift to rural areas. This shift seems to be initiating a period of turbulence and change in rural America.*

While the dominant characteristic of rural life remains—and, despite change, is likely to remain—spaciousness, changes in population distribution create a new countryside: "Growth in urban technology and complexity of life serves to increase the differences between urban and rural areas. Those areas relatively untouched by urbanization become anachronistic; those areas in transition to urbanization become the scenes of a complex identity crisis."1

The urbanizing trends that transform rural life consist of the "strip development" and the "service villages" that cluster around interstate exits. Any institution, such as library or school, which functions in rural America by distributing its services across distance, faces frequently conflicting cultural, societal, and governmental pressures that make its course a stormy one.

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*The opinions expressed in this article are the authors' own. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official U.S. Department of Education position or policy.
A Growing Population

This growing rural population trend may have taken us by surprise. The rural population was 53,478,000 in 1970; it had increased to 56,954,000 in 1975. Between 1970 and 1975 the population of rural America grew 6.5 percent, a rate more rapid than that of metropolitan America, where the corresponding increase was 4.2 percent.

Fifteen years after the 1960 decennial census there were 5.5 million more Americans in the rural countryside. About 28 percent of all Americans are now country dwellers and in 1970 36 percent (eighteen) of our states had 40 percent or more of their population as rural residents.

Geographic Remoteness

While the bulk of rural residents are in nonfarming occupations, typical rural occupations, such as farming, livestock raising, horticulture, forestry, mining, and recreation, determine population patterns. Agriculture, a primary consumer of space, utilized 45 percent of the nation's land in 1975, but only 2.5 percent of its population. In substantially rural states the allocation of land to agriculture was 44 percent. For remote rural places the median allocation of agricultural land was 63.6 percent.

While the total rural population grows, its distribution pattern remains one of comparative sparsity. The continental United States has a population distribution of sixty persons per square mile. In the substantially rural states, that distribution is 26.5 persons per square mile, and drops to 19.0 persons per square mile in areas of rural isolation. Even among the most isolated places, though, there are differences. Among the remote places sampled, Essex County, Vermont, had nine persons per square mile; Meagher County, Montana, had one person per square mile, but Unicoi County, Tennessee, had eighty-five persons per square mile.

The pattern of rural population centers is one of small clusters, despite the growth of the semi-urban strip developments and interstate service villages. In remote rural places, towns are smaller, with most residents living in the countryside. In a sub-sample of isolated counties, towns were generally small, with a significant proportion (12.7 percent) reporting fewer than 100 residents. A majority of remote rural towns had a population of 500 persons or less in 1975 (see Table 1).

Minorities in Rural Areas

Minorities are probably not an increasing share of the rural popu-
### Rural Population in the 1970s

**Table 1. Population of Remote Rural Towns, 1973-75**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Residents</th>
<th>Percentage of Towns (cumulative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 100</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000</td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4000</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


ulation. However, they (particularly the black rural dwellers) continue to account for a substantial portion of the rural southern population. The 1960 census counted 90 percent of the rural population as white. Of the remaining tenth, 90 percent were black, 7 percent were reservation-dwelling native Americans, and the rest were Hispanic. Minority groups continue to be urban immigrants, moving to the cities, contrary to the trend of an increasing rural population. The substantial enclaves of minorities that continue as rural dwellers account for some of the most deprived people on the North American continent.

### Deprivation in Rural Areas

The increasing population of rural America has not redressed the social and economic imbalance toward deprivation afflicting country life in the fifty years since the Great Depression. The rural deprivation differential is illustrated by the mean number of families living below the poverty level. In the substantially rural states in 1970, families had a poverty rate 86 percent greater than the nation as a whole. In this national sample of rural isolated places, the number of families living below the poverty level was 151 percent greater than the national rate. The 1970 mean percentages of families below the poverty level were: nationally, 10.7 percent; in substantially rural states, 19.9 percent; and in isolated rural counties, 26.9 percent.5
Relationship to Information Sources

Persons dwelling in remote areas have the same human needs everyone possesses, but their remoteness engenders a social system that must necessarily respond to a sparse population distribution. Relationships are affected by space and the relatively small clusters of people. The scattered distribution of people encourages a personalized relationship among country dwellers, which springs in part from the need for and consequent high value placed upon immediate sources of information. Organized information sources are in short supply and tend to be from the outside or urban areas. Therefore, their validity for the rural dweller is viewed with suspicion—a reflex of the high personal costs that can be incurred from no information or misinformation. Rural people remain ear-oriented because oral information comes from a verifiable source, as compared with the unseen sources of printed materials. Audiovisual materials may have a psychological entrée more acceptable than print because of the appeal to the eye and ear. Any information tends to bear more credibility if its mode is personalized and individualized. The professional who has survived the long, round-about, anecdotal nature of a country school, library board, or grange meeting needs to perceive that a careful, lengthy, painstaking translation of new facts and ideas is being conducted in which these concepts are being transformed and tested for at-hand community relevancy.

The rural telephone is a prime source of information and a reducer of loneliness. Its inclusion as an artifact of humor in American mythology touches upon, but conceals, the “need to know” of persons living in remote places. As a safety device, the telephone cannot be overlooked. However, in a sample of rural isolated counties, despite the attributes of safety and of reduction of isolation through communication, family income prohibited the universal presence of the telephone; about 23 percent of the families had no available telephone service. The extent of telephone service varied greatly. Minnesota’s rurally isolated counties report a low 5.4 percent of households without such service. Opposed to this, one Mississippi county reported that 67.3 percent of its households had no telephone service. Table 2 illustrates the range of rural family telephone availability.

Travel

The dominance of distance in rural life places critical emphasis on time devoted to travel and on the necessary expenditure of energy. Any distribution system, such as rural library services, must deal with these
Rural Population in the 1970s

TABLE 2. Rural Households Without Telephone Service, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Households</th>
<th>Rural States</th>
<th>Isolated Rural Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 (median)</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range* (R₁)</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range (R₂)</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Range: R₁ indicates the least favorable end of the range and R₂ indicates the most favorable.

critical factors. In remote places 69.8 percent of the residents live in the countryside away from towns. This spatial distribution shapes their lives and the social and commercial institutions to which they relate.

One activity—travel to work by the individual—is a concern in familial economics. Such travel can: (1) reduce time devoted to family life; (2) act as a surcharge on residential costs; and (3) reduce the opportunity to use local social and commercial services, since all the available travel budget may be devoured by work-related travel. Daily, about 17.5 percent of all Americans travel beyond their county boundaries to their place of employment. Residents of rural states tend to travel less. Of the eighteen substantially rural states, only three exceed the norm: Kentucky (10 percent), New Hampshire (19.4 percent), and Minnesota (18.4 percent). However, these percentages may increase for remote rural places. The median for isolated rural communities is 18.6 percent. In the sample of commuting in remote places, there were some remarkably high proportions of the population traveling: Kemper, County, Mississippi, reported 30.5 percent; Scott County, Kentucky, 30.2 percent; and Tishomingo County, Mississippi, 25.7 percent.

Such personal expenditures of time and resources must be considered in any social service design. For those remote areas with a high incidence of commuting to work and a low percentage of telephone accessibility, those who design social services for even minimum levels of exposure and response will need to go beyond conventional delivery modes, hours of operation, and service sites. Hidden costs to these rural residents are the disproportionate share in taxes they pay—with which they purchase social services based upon an urban concept.

Remote Commercial Facilities

Commercial facilities correspond to their environmental setting.
Some statistical data exist which are descriptive of facilities and services available to rural residents. In a sampling of services available to 742,000 persons in remote areas situated in 66 counties, there were reported 2345 food stores, 641 auto dealers, and 401 furniture stores. These categories are highly selective, but permit some comparative impressions.

In the United States one food store serves an average of 778 patrons. In remote places, one food store serves the smaller market of 316 residents (see Table 3). A smaller market means a greater per person capital investment and a more limited selection. While bearing the disability of limited purchase options, persons in remote areas in 1975 spent a greater part of their per capita annual expenditures for certain purchases than their urban counterparts. Nationally, per capita annual outlays for these expenditures were $2204.50, but outlays in the same categories for dwellers in remote rural places were 51.4 percent greater, at $3338.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Remote Rural Counties</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food store</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto dealer</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>1157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General merchandise</td>
<td>3702</td>
<td>1616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture store</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparative underdevelopment of the commercial structure in remote places and the reliance on personalized information inhibit the development of informed consumer awareness, making geographically remote residents vulnerable to the unscrupulous salesman and his personalized delivery system. Nor do television commercials, particularly those with promptings to a toll-free telephone number, assist the rural resident.

The rural businessman with his smaller capital, smaller volume, and lack of reliable market information is at a disadvantage, as are his patrons. The social agencies that could support strengthened consumer and business information suffer from the rural deprivation differential which inhibits the full participation of rural areas in national civic life.

Social Facilities: Life Support Systems

Available data on rural social services are as selective as they are for commercial services. Health services, despite a federal program of hos-
Rural Population in the 1970s

Hospital construction (Hill-Burton), have not provided rural residents with equitable levels of standards for life support systems.

The number of physicians serving remote places is severely deficient. Nationally, practice is available at a rate of 167.4 physicians for 100,000 persons. The median number of physicians in isolated rural places is 49.5 physicians per 100,000 residents. Nationally, there are 66 hospital beds per 10,000 persons; substantially rural states exceed the national mean somewhat, with a median of 68 beds per 10,000 rural residents. However, in more intensely rural areas, there is a median of only 49.4 beds.

A severe deficiency exists in health care for isolated rural areas. Seventeen remote counties in the isolated rural places sample (representing 14.4 percent of the sample) had no hospital facilities available. Projections of this figure provide an estimate of 1.17 million persons in the United States with no resident county health care facilities.

Vulnerable children also seem to have fewer resources in rural areas. Nationally, families in the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program received $190 monthly. In substantially rural states the mean was $147 monthly; for remote places the mean was $154. Those means are 22.6 and 18.9 percent below the national average, respectively. In 1970 the program provided assistance to 1,239,756 children nationally. Of these children, 193,374 (15.6 percent) lived in the 18 substantially rural states. Eleven of those states fell below the national mean for ADC family assistance (see Table 4).

**TABLE 4. RURAL DISTRIBUTION OF ADC FAMILY GRANTS, 1970 (CUMULATIVE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Amount</th>
<th>Rural States</th>
<th>Isolated Rural Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $50</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Federal financial assistance through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) was made available for the assistance of 46,269 institutionalized children nationally in 1971. Only half of the 18 substantially rural states reported any such use of federal funds for institutions, sheltering 7792 children.
Unfortunately, in this area substantially rural states provide fewer hours of staff training and a more diffuse concentration of time. As an example, 33 percent of children's institution staff nationally received more than thirty-one hours of training, but the nine reporting rural states trained only 16.5 percent of their staff members at that level. Nationally, children in institutions served by ESEA were assisted by staff members with an average of 27.8 hours of training. Children in the institutions of rural states were aided by staff with an average training time of 7.25 hours. ESEA Title I expenditures per institutionalized child averaged $278.65 in the substantially rural states, with a low of $186.80 in Idaho and a high of $664.89 in Minnesota.

Obviously, library services to rural vulnerable children must take into account the lack of printed resources in their lives. Low family incomes tend to be spent on food, housing, clothing, and energy for travel and heat, rather than on books and magazines. Poorly funded and poorly staffed institutions can almost be guaranteed to lack other than the most primitive library services.

**Education-Related Expenditures**

This paper does not focus on the role of the rural library as such. However, it does treat here, as one of its perspectives, the expenditures which rural people have available for their educational functions. One marked illustration of the rural/urban differential as it operates in education is the annual revenue of public schools allocated per pupil. Nationally, the average annual per pupil revenue reached $1715 in 1975. Federal assistance accounted for 8.8 percent of that amount, state assistance for 43.9 percent, and locally raised tax revenues for 47.3 percent. An analysis of the eighteen substantially rural states shows that assistance from federal sources was 27.7 percent below the national mean, and that amounts from state and local sources were each 66.6 percent below the national level.

Federal assistance for selected educational programs (elementary and secondary, handicapped, higher education, and libraries) amounted to $6.23 billion. The eighteen substantially rural states received 21 percent of that amount ($1.13 billion). Nationally, 3.2 percent of the $6.23 billion ($198 million) was allocated to libraries. For the eighteen rural states, the federal allocation to libraries in those individual states was a mean of 3 percent of the state's total federal allocation.

**Libraries**

Eleven of the eighteen states fall below the national average of
federal funds obligated for libraries in 1976. Rural residents spend a lesser share of their own tax-raised revenue for community library support than do their urban counterparts. They rely more heavily on supplementary, nongovernmental sources for additional revenue. Yet, even with this assistance by transfer funds and local gifts, the rural expenditure for community library services fails to approach the national mean. Of the 8307 public libraries in the United States, 38.8 percent (3223) had annual revenues of $10,000 or less in 1974. Of the 5417 rural public libraries, serving 28.8 percent of the national population, 51.1 percent (2768) had annual incomes of $10,000 or less. That is, 32 percent more rural libraries were likely to be in a completely inadequate funding range than were urban libraries.

The deficiency in information sources in rural life was noted above. The school and the public library are the two local publicly funded information sources generally available to rural society. While public libraries in the United States were renewing their collections at an average rate of 7.1 percent annually, rural libraries’ renewal rate was only 5 percent. The mean number of volumes per library nationally was 47,000. For rural libraries the mean was 20,000, 57 percent below the national mean.

In audiovisual holdings, rural public libraries held an average of 320 titles per library, contrasting with 1000 titles for all public libraries in the nation. The mean for the 30,000 rural school libraries was 804 audiovisual titles. Rural school libraries hold an average of 5876 books. While maintaining smaller collections of books, the rural school libraries came closer to the national average. Only 16 percent of rural school libraries were below the national mean of school library holdings, while 57 percent of rural public libraries were below the national mean.

While rural community libraries rely somewhat more heavily on transfer funds and nonpublic funds for revenue, the principal expenditure in public libraries is for personnel. The training and education levels of rural librarians have not attained the national average for public library personnel. Public library salary rates are not available; however, rural public libraries as a group devote the smallest share of their expenditure dollar (44.8 percent) for personnel salaries. The major group of rural libraries, the 4187 agencies serving population areas of less than 10,000 expend the minimum share for salaries (38.5 percent) of all strata of public library agencies.

Some data for 1974 are available for the annual salaries of school librarians/media specialists. In that year their national mean salary was $11,219. In seventeen of the eighteen substantially rural states (Arkansas
did not report), the median salary was $9844. Salaries in these seventeen rural states ranged from $8196 (Mississippi) to $12,854 (Minnesota). Of these states, sixteen were below the national mean; one was above.

Level of education among rural librarians is also lower than the national average. In 1974, when 27 percent of all public librarians served in rural areas, 58.1 percent of rural public librarians did not have a bachelor's degree, compared with 32.9 percent nationwide. Twenty-one percent of all rural public librarians did have a bachelor's degree and another 22 percent also had a graduate degree (compared with national figures of 20 percent and 47 percent, respectively).

Educational Achievement Among Rural Residents

In both rural and urban areas of the United States, the proportion of persons completing four years or more of college increased between 1968 and 1975 (see Table 5). Men in metropolitan and rural areas made substantial gains in completing four or more years of higher education within the five years from 1970 to 1975. However, the astonishing gains, proportionally, were for rural women (28.8 percent, compared to 29.2 percent for men), and, although the base remains small, for rural black men (56.5 percent). The impact of even these figures is minimized, however, by the gains of metropolitan black men (79.1 percent) and black women (44.7 percent).

The increase in the number of adults completing four or more years of college education is an important factor in education of the rural family. Table 6 shows the influence of parental education on the test scores of offspring in five subject areas. In Table 7, these data are organized by type of residential area.

One method of assessing educational status by community is to present the percentage of persons who fall below the presumably normal grade level (see Table 8). Rural high school students exhibited the greatest displacement from their expected educational status. When these data were related to Tables 6 and 7, it was found that if the adult maintaining the family had not completed high school, the proportion of 5- to 17-year-olds enrolled below the mode (anticipated level) was significantly larger than for all persons of that age group. However, where the parent had completed one or more years of college, there was no significant difference in level of enrollment.

Libraries serving students or a general population with lower reading levels should be acutely sensitive to the need to provide materials at different levels of complexity and difficulty. The adult with
Rural Population in the 1970s

TABLE 5. PERCENTAGES OF ADULTS COMPLETING FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE, BY RESIDENTIAL AREA, RACE, AND SEX, 1968 AND 1975*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>% Change</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adults are defined as citizens at least twenty-five years old.

TABLE 6. INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL EDUCATION ON TEST SCORES OF OFFSPRING, 1976*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Educational Level</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No high school</td>
<td>-8.4</td>
<td>-10.8</td>
<td>-11.1</td>
<td>-10.9</td>
<td>-14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
<td>-10.7</td>
<td>-6.0</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
<td>-11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduation</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post high school</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>-8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. median (out of 100 points)</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistics are expressed as amount of deviation from the national median for each subject.

TABLE 7. INFLUENCE OF RESIDENTIAL AREA ON TEST SCORES, 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Area</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme rural</td>
<td>-3.6</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small community</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-density metropolitan</td>
<td>-7.4</td>
<td>-10.4</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
<td>-7.2</td>
<td>-14.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-density metropolitan</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANN DRENNAN & HENRY DRENNAN

reading difficulties nevertheless usually shares the intellectual concerns and interests of his or her more literate neighbor. The phrase "high interest, low reading level" sometimes masks rewritten children's materials. Clear, brief materials in areas of sociology, history, psychology, government, and consumerism are often more in keeping with local adult needs.

TABLE 8. PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS BELOW MODAL GRADE LEVEL, 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Area</th>
<th>Ages 5-13</th>
<th>Ages 14-17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central city</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside central city</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Functional illiteracy is considered an educational disability often associated with economic liability and extreme difficulty in obtaining access to full civic life. In Table 9 functional illiteracy is measured by grade level completed. The table indicates that the sharpest improvement in completion of five years of elementary education was attained by rural white women. Rural black men experienced the least change. In general, rural rates of functional illiteracy compared well with metropolitan scores, with both male and female rural whites exhibiting remarkable reduction (31.0 percent and 34.6 percent respectively).

TABLE 9. PERCENTAGES OF FUNCTIONAL ILLITERATES, BY RESIDENTIAL AREA, RACE, AND SEX, 1968 AND 1975*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residency</th>
<th>Male 1968</th>
<th>Male 1975</th>
<th>% Decrease</th>
<th>Female 1968</th>
<th>Female 1975</th>
<th>% Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*"Functional illiterate" is defined here as a person age twenty-five years or older who has completed less than five years of elementary education.
Isolated rural places were studied for mean grade-level completion of those over twenty-five years of age. Statistics showed that a significant proportion of the population finished less than twelve grades, and an extremely high proportion lacked a high school diploma. In fact, nearly one-fourth (23.8 percent) of the population of thirty-one to forty of the rural isolated places sampled had not completed high school. The range in the states sampled for percentage of the population with a high school diploma was from 22.9 percent to 85.7 percent; the median was 63.3 percent. For the eighteen substantially rural states, the median was 51.8 percent of the population without a high school diploma, based on mean figures by state; the range was 33.3 percent to 62.2 percent.

Rural American tends to be an educationally deficient sector. For years its manpower has migrated to urban America. Educational facilities and services, dependent upon transfer payments from federal and state governments, have remained well below national norms. For example, rural libraries (public more than school) do not attain a level of support for education commensurate with need. Although federal and state library programs are designed to attain educational parity, they fall far below that goal. While rural Americans have made some astonishing successes in attaining higher educational levels, their numbers are still more afflicted with illiteracy than are urban and suburban populations.

Adult Education

Adult education has been developed to offset such disabilities. Frank Fratoe recently described some of the education problems of farm residents and adult education:

Farm residents who have not completed college or high school can use an alternative path to expand their learning skills—adult education. Unfortunately, fewer farm residents seventeen years old and over pursued this opportunity in 1975 than did their nonfarm counterparts in the four major geographic regions. Of those who did enroll almost all were white despite data suggesting that farm blacks need adult education experience the most. The largest overall differences can be noted in the South, where the proportion of metropolitan residents taking adult education (13 percent) was about three times that of farm dwellers who did so (4.4 percent).8

Another factor needs to be considered as well. The mean age of rural
Americans tends to be somewhat greater than that of urban citizens, and as a group, older Americans have a greater educational deficit than do the young (see Table 10). Nearly one-half of all Americans sixty-five years and older never attended high school. As of 1978, 49 percent of the men and 44 percent of the women in this age group had stopped formal schooling by the eighth grade. A low level of attraction seems to hamper rural adult education. The minor rate of participation by black males is troubling, for as a group rural black males have the least movement out of illiteracy. Rural residents in general, however, participate at a rate equal to or surpassing that of Northeast metropolitan participants. But farm residents, and especially black participants, one of the weakest groups for educational attainment, are not being served (see Table 11).

Rural Family Life

There were 16,086,000 rural families in 1970. In 1977, there were 18,755,000. In 1977, 2,058,000 of these were families headed by a female (10.9 percent). Of the 17,149,000 white rural families in 1977, 9 percent had a female head. Of the 1,416,000 black rural families, 34 percent had a female head.

From 1975 to 1977, 3,815,000 persons moved from metropolitan to rural areas; 3,578,000 were white; 197,000 were black. However, a nearly equal number of black persons entered urban areas—194,000. In contrast, 2,975,000 white persons moved from rural areas to metropolitan areas, for a net increase of 603,000 white persons in rural residency.

Older persons were a substantial share of those moving to rural areas. From March 1975 to March 1978, 573,000 older persons changed from an urban to a rural residence. Persons 55 years and older are a significant demographic group in rural America, where they constitute 35.8 percent of the 43 million persons in the United States over that age. While substantial numbers of citizens fifty-five years and older moved to rural areas recently, those areas have maintained an older population for many years. In the eighteen substantially rural states, 10.5 percent of the population in 1975 was age sixty-five or older versus 9.8 percent for the United States as a whole. In a sample of isolated rural places, the median population in this age bracket reached 14.1 percent of total population.

The principal minority groups, blacks and Hispanics, share rural life with a predominantly white population. These minorities tend to be urban dwellers or to move to urban areas. In 1970, 5,714,000 black
Rural Population in the 1970s

TABLE 10. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF RURAL ADULTS 65 YEARS AND OLDER, MARCH 1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 years</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more years</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 11. PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION, BY RESIDENTIAL AREA, 1975

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Area</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Total*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast metropolitan</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfarm</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Civilian population aged 17 years and older.

persons were rural residents; by 1977 their numbers had risen to 6,427,000—a 12.5 percent gain. However, this increase was due to more births and fewer deaths rather than to urban-to-rural migration. A national trend appeared for the small population of Hispanics, whose increase from 1974 to 1977 was 8.5 percent. In numbers, these citizens decreased 234,000 (11.6 percent) in the countryside, but increased 707,000 (8 percent) in metropolitan areas. In 1970, 56,338,000 white persons lived in rural United States. Their number was 62,158,000 in 1977. The proportional increase was 10.3 percent.

Rural Family Income

Family income compared by residential location illustrates sharply the social differential that divides rural and urban America. Occupational income is, of course, the major support of most Americans; however, the same occupations provide a much lower level of family
well-being in rural United States than in urban United States (see Table 12). The mean earnings for rural males are more than 25 percent below those for suburban males, and more than 15 percent below those for central city males. In all but one of the major occupations, earnings of rural workers are below those of workers from other geographic areas. Female salaries for all occupations fall well below those of males, with those for rural females at the bottom of the scale.

**TABLE 12. ANNUAL EARNINGS, BY OCCUPATION, RESIDENTIAL AREA, AND SEX, 1977 (IN THOUSANDS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Central City Male</th>
<th>Central City Female</th>
<th>Suburban Male</th>
<th>Suburban Female</th>
<th>Rural Male</th>
<th>Rural Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Technical</td>
<td>$19.5</td>
<td>$11.2</td>
<td>$21.2</td>
<td>$11.4</td>
<td>$16.7</td>
<td>$9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management/Administration</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operative</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/Equipment</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor (except farm)</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming/Farm management</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm labor/Supervision</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private household (domestic)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean total</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 shows the same occupational groupings with numbers of rural residents employed. Clerical and service occupations employ the most rural women, accounting for 48 percent. Rural women employed in professional occupations constitute about 24 percent of all professional women employees and 14 percent of all employed rural women.

The occupational characteristics of rural United States do not furnish a family economic base comparable to that of other sectors of
TABLE 13. EMPLOYMENT OF RURAL RESIDENTS, 1977 (IN THOUSANDS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Technical</td>
<td>1,831</td>
<td>1,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management/Administration</td>
<td>2,131</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>3,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>3,577</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operative</td>
<td>2,303</td>
<td>1,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/Equipment</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor (except farm)</td>
<td>1,272</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming/Farm management</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm labor/Supervision</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>1,175</td>
<td>2,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private household (domestic)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,572</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,967</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 14. MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME, BY RESIDENTIAL AREA AND RACE, 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Area</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>$13,318</td>
<td>$7,435</td>
<td>$12,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central city</td>
<td>15,009</td>
<td>9,361</td>
<td>13,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>17,371</td>
<td>12,037</td>
<td>17,101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

America (see Table 14). In 1975, twelve of the eighteen substantially rural states had a median family income of $10,968, 8 percent below the national figure of $11,921. Among these states, the lowest median family income was $9,559 and the highest was $13,611, both below the median of $13,798 for all rural families.

In rural isolated places, family income paralleled other indices of deprivation. The 1975 median family income was $6,763; the mode for these isolated rural places was in the $6,000-$6,999 annual range. Sixty-five percent of isolated counties had a family income below $6,999 annually.

In 1977, 14 percent of rural residents lived below the poverty level. That amount represented a significant improvement over the 19.3 percent (11,981,000 persons) for 1970. However, 54 percent of the rural poor lived in areas of high concentrations of poverty. Rural whites had a poverty rate of 11.4 percent in 1977, but rural blacks experienced the astonishing poverty rate of 38.2 percent. However, even this represents...
an improvement, since the rural black poverty rate in 1970 was 52.6 percent. In 1977, 19 percent of heads of rural white families below the poverty level were unemployed, compared to 59 percent of the heads of rural black families below the poverty level.

Rural women tend to be particularly vulnerable economically. Of 85.2 million women in the United States in 1975, 62.4 million reported receiving income. Of the 9.3 million black women, 7.2 million reported receipt of some income. A depressed pattern applied to all women, black and white. The mode (i.e., the single category including the greatest number for women receiving income was $1-$1999. An estimated 19,661,000 women—about 30 percent of all women reporting income—were in that income category in 1977. Rural women reported a median income of $2828 in 1975, although, like their urban sisters, the majority shared the $1-$1999 income category. Rural black women reported median income of $2152, the lowest of the population groups.

Women headed 2,058,000 rural families in 1977. Rural families with female heads increased by 12.1 percent between 1970 and 1973. Receipt of child support is directly related to the level of educational attainment. About 45 percent of mothers with four or more years of college received some form of child support from the fathers of their children, compared to 29 percent of mothers who were only high school graduates, and just 11 percent of mothers who did not complete any years of high school. The mean amount received by college graduates ($5290) was sharply higher than the mean amount received by mothers who were high school graduates ($1960). With characteristically lower educational levels, rural women are probably at a disadvantage in receiving any degree of adequate child support. This is reinforced by data from regions of the United States reporting child support. The annual mean for the Northeast was $3210; for the South, $2130; and for the North central area, $2240. Within the southern region, women in the east south central division (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi—all substantially rural states) received a mean annual payment of $1510—38 percent below the national mean.

In 1976 Social Security payments to retirees in rural remote places were an average $190 monthly. The mean annual family income for residents of remote places in that year was $6465, compared to $2281.32 for the remote rural retired. The elderly are heavily reliant on library services for their reading materials due to low incomes.

Voting

Rural residents tend to maintain a sturdier political interest (as
Rural Population in the 1970s

indicated by voting in national elections) than do other publics. In the 1972 presidential elections, 56.7 percent of registered American voters cast ballots. Rural states responded most heavily. Vermont, the most rural of states, recorded a 62.2 percent voting rate of registrants, and in Iowa, a substantially rural state, 63.6 percent of the registered electorate voted. The rural states as a group ranked high, but with significant regional differences. Of the rural states, the median percentage of eligible citizens who voted was 62.2. No southern state except Kentucky scored above 48.5 percent. Among other states, Minnesota and South Dakota recorded the highest voter participation (68.9 percent).

Rural isolated places consistently report heavier voter participation than do their parent states. For example, Alabama has a state voting rate of 43.6 percent and a rural isolated area rate of 61.5 percent. Idaho has a state voting record of 63.8 percent and a rural isolated area rate of 70.5 percent. Kentucky's voting record of 48.5 percent statewide becomes 51.3 percent in its rural isolated communities.

Conclusion

Given the litany of deprivation in economic, educational, and service terms presented above, why do people reside in rural areas? Libraries designing services for rural residents need to stress the advantages of rural living while compensating for the disadvantages. Freedom from overcrowding, air pollution, noise, high crime rates, artificial environments, and depersonalization are definite pluses in rural living. Emphasis on family and religious life is also an important aspect of rural living. Politics at the local level is personalized in rural areas. Many rural areas have poor or no radio and television reception, opening the door to printed sources of information and recreation. The closeness to nature and natural resources carries with it responsibility, however. Materials on the intelligent custody of natural resources speak directly to the rural resident. Often, rural isolation allows for the sustenance of ethnic heritages and specific cultures that crowded cities gobble up. Libraries can do a booming business with local history projects.

Rural public and school libraries, like rural dwellers, are afflicted by great distances, high energy costs, and low incomes. The challenges for imagination and creativity in rural librarianship are high. The intrinsic rewards can be great, despite the typically lower salary levels, since rural librarians can share in the advantages of rural living, while helping to dispel some of the disadvantages.
References


3. For purposes of this paper the following eighteen states are identified as "substantially rural." These states are considered a "sample" and are a principal unit of inquiry. In 1970, 16 percent of these states had a population that was more than 50 percent rural. In terms of this paper's definition, Vermont, with some 60 percent of its population as country dwellers, is the most rural of the United States. The eighteen are: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, and West Virginia. These eighteen had a substantially rural population of at least 40 percent.

4. Drennan and Shelby, op. cit.

5. The concepts "remote" and "rurally isolated" are difficult to define or determine statistically. This paper equates the two. For a statistical illustration of remoteness, a random 10 percent sample was drawn of all counties of less than 20,000 population within the eighteen substantially rural states. For some purposes, a 50 percent sub-sample was drawn.

6. The library programs included are: Library Services and Construction Act, Titles I, II, and III; consolidated programs under Title IV of ESEA, School Library Resources, Elementary School Equipment; and Title IIA and IIB of HEA, College Library Assistance, Library Training and Research.

7. Most rural libraries (4187) had an average collection of 10,800 volumes.


The History and Development of Rural Public Libraries

LISA DEGRUYTER

The history of rural public library service in the United States has been one of constant expansion of service to unserved populations and of the formation of increasingly larger units of service. Public services in rural areas must overcome five interrelated obstacles: scattered population and low population density, poor transportation and communication systems, lack of financial resources, lower educational levels than in urban areas, and division of authority among several local governments which may not be related to social, economic, and settlement patterns. Since the migration to the cities beginning in the late nineteenth century, there has been a social and economic division between city dwellers and country people, and a further division within rural areas between village and farm.

Five successive periods of rural library development can be identified, all striving to overcome this rural/urban split and to equalize service to rural inhabitants. The first was the library extension movement, beginning in the 1890s, which first extended service to rural people through traveling libraries operated by the state library agencies. Service by this means proved too great a burden on the state agencies and did not provide the same level of service that the cities and towns received. Next came a move toward county libraries in the World War I years and the 1920s, pioneered by California and New Jersey, which aimed at making one local government responsible for library service and providing an adequate tax base. This system worked well in Cali-
fornia because of the large size of the counties, but most of the counties in the country were not large enough to be adequate units of service, so the movement in the late 1930s and 1940s was toward regional and cooperative services. Libraries had first experienced the benefits of federal and state aid during the depression from Works Progress Administration programs, and began looking toward this aid as a way of providing improved rural service. This hope was realized in the Library Services Act (LSA) of 1956, which provided federal aid through the states specifically for rural libraries. LSA was expanded in 1964 to become the Library Services and Construction Act, with much more emphasis on aid to large and urban libraries and on interlibrary cooperation on larger regional and statewide bases.

A discussion of the terms rural and rural library service is in order here. The word rural comes from the Latin word for "country," and its basic meaning of "living in the country" (as opposed to the town or city) has remained unchanged for centuries. However, the substance of country life has changed considerably, especially in the last century. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, virtually every American lived in the country and farmed for a living, or at least part of his living. Since then, the bulk of the population has shifted to the cities (although the absolute size of the rural population has remained stable since the depression, and there has been migration away from the cities in the 1970s), and the rural population has become predominantly nonfarm as agribusiness and corporate farming increased. Since the connotation of an agricultural life is no longer valid, what distinguishes the rural inhabitant from the urban? The old idea of country life as characterized by simplicity and lack of sophistication still obtains. The stereotype of the country bumpkin dates at least from the fifteenth century (when rural was a synonym of the pejorative rustic), and its persistence can be seen as deriving from two enduring facts of country life: low population density and the simpler social structure it enables. Rural areas can be identified not so much by population levels or economic patterns as by the degree of influence of urban social structure on the community. Rural areas near large metropolitan areas tend to have more nearly urban values. Drennan and Shelby have pointed out more than twenty distinguishing characteristics of rural populations that affect information use, most of which can be seen to derive from lack of sophistication in dealing with relatively complex social structures.¹

If "rural" cannot be identified entirely by place, what about rural library service? Until the 1940s, rural library service was identified largely with extension services. The first rural services were the travel-
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ing libraries administered by the state, and were based on a conviction that rural areas were not able to organize and support their own libraries. This conviction has turned out to be reasonably well founded. Rural library services today may be based on a local county library, but it in turn depends on support from metropolitan libraries, regional and state libraries, and state and federal funds. Any definition of rural library service must include not only libraries in rural areas, but the supporting agencies and extension services as well.

The Library Extension Movement

The public library movement of the nineteenth century resulted almost entirely in municipal libraries which did not serve the surrounding countryside. Only the New England states, notably Massachusetts, achieved complete or nearly complete coverage in the nineteenth century, because of their unique form of local government, the New England town. This system included both the urban area and the surrounding countryside under one local government. In the 1890s, state library agencies began to be formed as part of the state legislative library, as a separate library commission, or, in a few states, as part of the state education agency. These agencies were responsible for providing “advice and aid” to local (mostly city and town) governments wishing to establish libraries or already maintaining libraries, and for providing extension service in the form of traveling libraries.

The traveling library was “a collection of books lent to a community for general reading,” and its purpose was to provide moral and cultural edification rather than useful information or research materials, which was in line with the purpose seen for small public libraries at that time. Collections were either “fixed sets,” in which the original combination of books remained unchanged and were rotated among different communities, or “open-shelf,” which were collections made up for a specific community from a central general collection. “Study libraries,” fixed sets on one topic or a series of topics, were loaned to community groups interested in pursuing special subjects. Special loans were also made from open-shelf collections to clubs, institutions, and schools.

Fixed sets were the recommended collections for traveling libraries, with special loans for serious readers. The administration of fixed sets was much easier, since new lists of books did not have to be made up each time a collection was sent out. Most of the books were fiction, with a few nonfiction titles to “help [people] think to some purpose.” The
idea was to encourage reading for the sake of reading, as a wholesome and uplifting recreation. Collections were to be located in public places—general stores, post offices, telephone exchanges—so as not to discourage those who might be intimidated by having to intrude on a private home, and an “interested librarian” put in charge. This first rural service was not free. Every state but Delaware and California required the borrowing community to pay at least some of the transportation charges.

Rural libraries were one of the many rural educational institutions that benefited from the country life movement, which began informally among urban middle-class professionals and businessmen, many of whom had rural backgrounds. The “closing of the frontier” had brought a slowdown in agricultural expansion; improved farming methods and machinery had decreased the amount of farm labor needed; and the urban population was growing rapidly through immigration from rural areas and from abroad. The country life movement was based on a conviction that the exodus to the cities was caused by deficiencies in rural life, and that the great democratic agrarian traditions on which the nation had been founded were about to be lost forever. The new urban middle class had a romantic view of the American farmer and the rural way of life they had so recently left, as a repository of their cultural traditions, a sort of living museum. There were several points of view on what exactly should be improved in rural life to preserve it, but the result was an effort to improve the economic lot of the farmer through scientific farming and marketing techniques, social and cultural life through the schools and churches, and access to urban facilities through better roads.

Rural sociology as a field of study became established at about this time, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the land grant universities and their extension agencies, and various private and semipublic organizations such as farm bureaus and cooperatives expanded research and educational programs to improve rural life. The movement gained legitimacy with the appointment of the Country Life Commission by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908. Public libraries were often recommended as one means of community improvement, and in at least two states, Oregon and Texas, county farmers’ libraries were authorized by state law.

By 1915 twenty-eight states had legislation authorizing state traveling libraries, and thirty-four had a state agency responsible for advising or supervising local libraries. New York was providing matching funds in aid to local libraries. The overwhelming majority of legislation at
this time permitted any municipal government to establish a public library. Only nine states—California, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania—permitted a county to maintain a library. In most states, county governments were permitted to contract with a municipal library for service, and municipalities were permitted to contract among themselves. In several of the states where county libraries were permitted, cities and towns could exempt themselves from the services and the support of the county library. These laws effectively meant that residents of unincorporated areas had no legal means of providing library service for themselves except to gain the use of a town library or to use the state traveling libraries, where they existed. Rural residents had no control over the administration of the town libraries, which, even if they served the outlying areas by contract, could be expected to have the needs of their immediate constituency as first priority.

County Libraries

The American Library Association Committee on Library Extension issued a report in 1926 which revealed that 93 percent of those people in the United States and Canada without library service were rural residents, living in open country or places with a population of less than 2500. This group constituted about 40 percent of the total population. The county library system had proved successful in California and New Jersey, and seemed the obvious solution to the problem of extending coverage to rural residents. As early as 1917, an article in Library Journal called for county library laws for all the states. County library service was advocated as the best means to universal library service, with the county levying taxes on the whole population to support a central library and many branches and deposit stations. This would have the advantages of allowing the employment of a trained librarian to supervise the whole unit, money to be spent on books instead of buildings, equal access for every citizen, plus the economies of scale engendered by centralized acquisitions and processing and the avoidance of duplications. Traveling libraries were being replaced by book trucks (later, bookmobiles) which at first supplied deposit stations and only later began circulating books directly.

The Julius Rosenwald Fund gave one-half million dollars in 1929 for a demonstration of county libraries across the South. Eleven counties in seven states (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) were chosen for the demonstra-
tions. The resulting libraries were thoroughly studied by Louis Round Wilson and Edward Wight of the University of Chicago. Both Wilson and Wight, along with Carleton Joeckel of the Public Library Inquiry, concluded that the county, in general, was too small a unit of service in terms of wealth, area, and population. Oliver Garceau analyzed the inadequacies of counties as having a service unit too small in population, wealth, and area; as having no justification for a service outlet other than the central library in the trade center; as having a too widely scattered population; and as weakening the central library by attempting extension service to this scattered population. The idea, at least, of county library service had been successful: from 1915 to 1940, the number of states with legislation authorizing counties to maintain public libraries increased from nine to thirty-seven.

Regional Libraries

During the depression, it became increasingly apparent that the county, in most instances, was not a large enough unit for rural library service. The proportion of those without service had decreased from 43 percent in 1926 to 37 percent in 1935, but 60,000 more people were without service, partly because 2 million people had moved back to the country due to unemployment in the cities. Of those without service in 1936, 88 percent were rural residents, and 75 percent of the rural population was still without service. Less than 10 percent of the counties in the country had complete service, and only 50 percent had partial service. The proportion of counties without service varied inversely with population: Carleton Joeckel, speaking at an institute on current trends in libraries in 1936, said, "the whole question of library extension is essentially a rural problem—a fact which we all know." Almost one-half of the counties in the United States were entirely rural (that is, they contained no incorporated place with a population of more than 2500), and nearly two-thirds of these had no library. Joeckel proposed several possible solutions: cooperation, federation on the Danish model of central libraries, county libraries, or multicounty regional libraries.

The first demonstration of regional library service was a project funded by the Carnegie Foundation United Kingdom Fund in British Columbia, and was widely held up as an example for the United States. Three regional libraries, with branches, deposit stations, and bookmobiles, centrally administered, were set up in 1936. Meanwhile, the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) was providing funding for library extension activities.
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In the early years of the depression, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and later WPA, provided funds for employing workers to repair books and to compile union catalogs and special indexes. By 1938 a Library Service Section of WPA had been created to coordinate all library projects, and the main thrust of the state programs under this section was to extend library service to areas without public libraries. In the period from 1935 to 1941, WPA spent twice the amount on library service projects that had been normally budgeted by state and local agencies, and WPA and the National Youth Administration (a part-time employment program for youth) more than doubled the size of the library work force.25 There were forty statewide projects, and at least half the counties in the country received assistance. At least two states, Arkansas and North Carolina, instituted state aid for libraries after WPA demonstrations.26

In the period from 1935 to 1940, six states (Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Vermont) passed legislation requiring the state library agencies to prepare statewide plans for setting up regional libraries. In most cases, these plans had to be approved by the local government agencies involved—a precarious political process. Thirty-one states had some provision for contracts between library agencies or for regional library agencies.27

After the War: LSA

The entire decade of the 1940s was characterized by a reexamination of goals and planning for the future by the library profession, but the exigencies of war prevented much action until the second half of the decade. The United States emerged from World War II as a major world power, with responsibility for the guardianship of the atomic bomb and for helping Europe and Japan recover from the devastation of the war. The war effort had produced a flood of technology waiting to be utilized in peacetime. Returning soldiers were taking advantage of the GI Bill to go to college and technical school in unprecedented numbers. The Marshall Plan, the country’s first major foreign aid effort, signaled a new kind of war, in which the building of alliances by sharing technology, education, and information was more important than fighting physical battles.

At issue was just what the role of libraries was to be in this new world. The American Library Association saw the new public library not as a place for literature, but as an information distribution agency taking advantage of the new technology, and as an agent of social
At the annual conference in June 1946, the ALA Council approved the first seven chapters of *Planning for Public Library Service*, the new set of standards produced by the Committee on Post-War Planning. This plan, written by Carleton Joeckel, called for library service that would provide "enlightened citizenship and rich personal living" for every American. It provided for four levels of service: a national bibliographic center, state library agencies in each state, regional reference centers, and, at the direct public service level, 1,200 public libraries, each serving a population unit of at least 90,000, replacing or consolidating the 7,500 public libraries then in existence.

The Public Library Inquiry was also proposed at the 1946 conference. Funded in the amount of $175,000 by the Carnegie Foundation and conducted by the Social Science Research Council, it was a comprehensive study of the development and objectives of the public library, current operations and management, government support and controls, services offered, and the relationship of the library to the community and of the library to the new technology and new developments in communications.

The results of the inquiry and the new standards both emphasized the importance of strong state library agencies and large units of service. State aid to libraries was increasing, and equalization of rural service was still being emphasized. These trends, along with the experience of public libraries with federal aid during the depression, the growing emphasis on federal social programs, and the new emphasis on education, culminated in the Library Services Act of 1956. Federal aid to rural libraries had been proposed in the 1930s by both ALA and the President's Advisory Committee on Education. After the establishment of the ALA Washington office in 1945, rural library legislation was introduced in every Congress until LSA was passed.

The Library Services Act was specifically designed to encourage the development of state and local library programs and to leave control of public libraries in the hands of state and local government. To be eligible for grants, states had to develop comprehensive plans for library service, and state and local funding for rural library service had to remain above 1956 levels. A rural area was defined as a place of under 10,000 population. Funds were allotted to the states on the basis of rural population and were matched by the states on the basis of their per capita income. Appropriations of $7.5 million annually were authorized, but the actual funding for 1957, the first year of operation, was only $2 million, and the full amount was never appropriated.
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Some of the major results of the program were the strengthening of the state library agencies, the demonstration and development of county and regional libraries, and the development of other cooperative projects. Over half the funds in the first year went for personnel, and about 40 percent for books and materials. Rural reference collections, especially, were strengthened, and film circuits and audiovisual centers were established. Other programs developed under LSA included centralized processing centers, training programs, and surveys of library needs for planning purposes.

Library Services and Construction Act of 1964

In 1960 LSA was extended for another five years at the same level of appropriations. For fiscal years 1960 through 1964, the entire amount, $7.5 million, was appropriated each year. In 1964 LSA was expanded to become the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). The new act removed the population limitations, so that LSCA was not confined to rural areas, and it contained three new programs beyond the basic continuation of LSA in Title I, Public Library Services. Title II provided funds for public library construction, Title III for interlibrary cooperation, and Title IV for state institutional libraries and services to the blind and physically handicapped. LSCA reflected the growing national concern in the 1960s for the urban poor and other disadvantaged groups besides the rural population. The original act ran through fiscal year 1967, but was extended in 1966 through fiscal year 1972, and in 1970 through 1976. The first year, $25 million for services and $30 million for construction were appropriated, and over the years funds for services increased slightly and funds for construction decreased sharply. No funds for construction have been appropriated since 1973.

The total effect of LSA and LSCA seems to have been increased centralization of service, not through direct administrative control, but through the strengthening of the state agencies. Provided with increased staff and funds, these agencies have been able to exert control through the personal contact of field workers, state-supported training programs for local personnel, demonstration projects, and bookmobile service. Multicounty libraries and cooperative systems have been promoted under Title III of LSCA, especially. It would seem that the benefits of LSCA for rural service have not been direct, but that rural libraries have benefited from the improved support services available from state agencies and cooperative systems.
Conclusion

The history of rural library service has been one of a struggle to provide equal service to the rural population. Transportation difficulties have been overcome by libraries that travel: boxes of books, bookmobiles, and recently, mail-order libraries. Low population density has been dealt with by increasingly large units of service. State and federal funding has to some extent alleviated the local lack of funds in rural areas. The division of authority caused by the large number of local government units which are allowed to maintain public libraries seems to be a continuing problem which has been dealt with only moderately successfully by statewide plans and cooperative systems, mainly because these programs are voluntary and local governments want to maintain their autonomy. Educational levels remain lower in rural areas, and since education seems to be the one factor linked consistently to library use, this may mean that, even were the other obstacles perfectly overcome, libraries would still not be as well supported in rural areas.

In spite of all this, rural library service does exist, and has been extending coverage and improving in quality of service since the nineteenth century. The flow of migration reversed in the 1970s, and a young and well-educated population is moving from the cities into the countryside. The next challenge of rural libraries may well be to adapt to larger populations with more urban values.

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Delivery Systems and Programs

NORMA J. McCALLAN

Of all groups and "minorities," rural citizens are among the most forgotten when it comes to any type of services or funding proposals, and rural library needs are among the least publicized or attended to in the library world.

It is not easy to define "rural public library service." Once there was a clearer demarcation between country and city, between open countryside and urban concentration. Now, not only has the automobile brought long ribbons of suburban development into fields and pastures and drastically shortened the time it takes to travel from urban to rural areas, but mass communication brings the same television and radio programs into the living rooms of the city dweller and his country cousin, and even the most isolated villager is seconds away from the beamed messages of a passing satellite or from a telephone solicitor in Chicago. Library systems and networks increasingly cut across town, city, county, and even state boundaries, and many, perhaps most, public libraries serve a composite of urban and rural patrons. Thus, to separate rural library services as a distinct entity is almost impossible.

A search of the library literature indexed under "rural" brings only an occasional entry for the United States and that is often a recollection of bygone days. The bulk of the articles are in foreign periodicals, with a surprisingly high proportion of them from Russia. Nevertheless, rural America is still very real. True, the number of farmers has drastically declined. Farm dwellers were three-fifths of the rural population (32 million) in 1920, and are now less than one-fifth, only 3.6 percent of the

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total population and still dwindling; meanwhile, the urban population has tripled in the last fifty years. However, total rural population has actually increased slightly in these same fifty years—from 52 million in 1920 to 54 million in 1970; these people live in 2100 basically rural counties which constitute about 90 percent of the land mass of the United States. As farmers flee to the city from the growing financial uncertainties of family farming, city dwellers move back to the country, lured by clean air, lower crime rate, and less abrasive lifestyle, or by the promise of jobs in factories relocated in areas of lower taxes (and lower wages), or in the booming mining and extractive industries. As Ann and Henry Drennan have succinctly brought out in their chapter on rural populations, there are still a number of significant differences in lifestyle and values between rural and urban people. Even if both populations were identical in tradition and culture, the information needs of rural residents and the means of satisfying them would remain distinct due to the sparsity of population and the vast distances between resource centers.

Before considering the various delivery systems and programs useful to or used by (the two are not necessarily synonymous) rural libraries, it might be well to review some of the facts about rural people—facts underlining the necessity for truly adequate library services in rural areas, but sometimes forgotten in concern with urban problems, electronic gadgetry, and national networking.

Although poverty is much more visible in a big city, census figures show that in fact the percentage of persons below the poverty level in metropolitan areas is 10.4, while the percentage in nonmetropolitan areas is 13.9. Rural housing conditions are considerably below the national average; unemployment and underemployment are chronic in many rural areas, and the percentage of adults who have less than an eighth-grade education is considerably higher than the national average. Rural communities have fewer health, mental health, or other social service agencies than urban areas, and rural citizens must spend more time and money to reach them, yet the proportions of children, elderly, and poor—people most likely to need health and social services—are higher. The shortage of health and mental health professionals is most severe in rural areas. Overall, rural residents receive a lower per capita share of the federal funds to deal with these problems than do their urban counterparts. This is true also of library dollars. Drennan has noted that funds are not allocated to the states on the basis of the rural deprivation differential, but on the basis of populations—a formula which does not address rural social inequities, rural financial
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capabilities, or the status of rural library development. He cites the fact reported in the 1976 NCLIS report *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Federal Funding of Public Libraries* that the average per capita library expenditure of SMSA residents was $6.61 in 1974, compared with $3.01 in rural areas.

Rural libraries must try, as must any type of library, to provide those materials and informational resources which meet the needs and interests of the population they are supposed to serve. In an urban setting one building may suffice to house and disseminate these materials; metropolitan areas may need branch libraries and bookmobiles to bring services adequately within reach of all neighborhoods and fringe areas, but the main library remains an important resource center and is reasonably accessible for research and study.

In a rural setting, where by definition the population is scattered, or gathered in places of less than 2500 population, the fiscal resources of an individual village can rarely support any but the most minimal library, and delivery of services from some central headquarters becomes critical. There are only three basic types of library delivery systems: vehicle, mail, or stationary building. Transmission of requests via electronic equipment, such as two-way closed-circuit television, is a possibility for the future, but not presently a viable delivery system. A vehicle may be anything from a small parcel delivery truck to a 35-foot bookmobile holding 5000 books to a tractor-hauled trailer. The most common type of mail delivery is by title selection from a catalog issued at regular intervals, though libraries have long mailed materials on an individual basis to patrons requesting them. Service from a stationary building could take any form, from a modern, well-equipped library complex, to a storefront run by volunteers or part-time help, a shelf of books at the crossroads grocery, or even a collection deposited in someone's home.

There is relatively little in the literature, as noted above, about rural library delivery services as such. Over the years a fairly large number of articles have appeared about bookmobiles, most of them of a human interest or anecdotal nature. Eleanor F. Brown's *Bookmobiles and Bookmobile Services* remains the primer, though the cost figures and some concepts are dated. Since the resurgence of books-by-mail in the early 1970s, a number of articles have detailed the initiation of new mail-a-book programs to supplement or replace a bookmobile operation or to reach citizens previously unserved, such as the homebound. Choong Kim's *Books by Mail* provides useful details on the operations of many programs nationwide and offers specific suggestions based on the experiences of practitioners. Not surprisingly, Choong Kim is as
partial to books-by-mail as the solution to delivery problems as Brown was to bookmobiles. Hu, Booms, and Kaltreider's *A Benefit-Cost Analysis of Alternative Library Delivery Systems*, done in 1974 for the Pennsylvania State Library to evaluate its long-term bookmobile and two year experimental books-by-mail programs, provides a complex economic analysis of costs and presumed benefits of each program. Since their data were admittedly limited and only certain variables were entered in the formulas, its conclusions may not be valid for other situations, particularly more rural ones. Food for thought are several of their findings: "nonusers are often only nonusers of a particular source of books, and...nonusers in the survey (or those comparable) could not, for the most part, be considered nonreaders or uninterested in reading";* "Book capacity [of a bookmobile] is the most influential variable...explaining total circulation....Time spent at stops also has a positive effect on total circulation....it is the duration of stay at each bookmobile stop, not the number of stops, that has a statistically significant effect on the increase in book circulation."*  

*PNLA Quarterly* published an article in 1976 on the costs of several modes of service delivery, including books-by-mail, bookmobiles, and construction of new libraries. Unfortunatley, the costs figured for the three modes of delivery are not easily compared, since they appear to be formulated for different population sizes. Nevertheless, figures for each separate system could be useful to someone planning a similar operation. Richard Brooks provided a helpful breakdown of how to figure bookmobile costs in *Minnesota Libraries* several years ago. His figure of $0.67 to circulate one book contrasts not unfavorably (given five years of inflation) with the data from the survey in this article. He also arrived at the same figure of $0.67 to circulate one book from the entire Dakota County Library System.

The questionnaire developed for a "Workshop on Bookmobiles and Alternatives," sponsored by the Loose Region of North Carolina in spring 1978, provides interesting data from the fifty-four North Carolina library systems about their bookmobile, smaller vehicle, and books-by-mail operations. The biggest problem with maintenance was overwhelmingly perceived to be generators, while the biggest problem with service was selection and space shortages; the largest concern was publicity. Respondents noted a large variety of stopping places, including factories and businesses, beauty shops, fire departments, and military installations. Unusual or specialized services which have been written up range from a microfiche card catalog of the entire library system carried on the Washington County, Mississippi, bookmobile, to a specially equipped bookmobile of the Hoyt Library in Kingston,
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Pennsylvania, providing service to handicapped children and the elderly in the area, and a Book Boat system utilizing a Presbyterian mission boat to bring service to remote areas of southeastern Alaska accessible only by boat or airplane. A likely candidate for replication in other areas is the Answer Van, which provides a very popular information and referral service on wheels to the semi-isolated housing developments springing up around rural Pemberton Township in Burlington County, New Jersey.

Almost nothing appears in the literature about fixed building sites as a means of delivery to rural residents. So many possibilities exist that an in-depth discussion of the usefulness, costs, and success rate would be inappropriate here. Certain observations gathered over the years, however, may be relevant. Villages and small towns of under 5000 population, for example, are unlikely to be able on their own to initiate and maintain adequate library service for their residents. The tax base necessary to provide adequate funding simply does not exist, nor are the resources or local expertise sufficient to sustain more than minimal service. Libraries inspired by an individual or group of people accustomed to using a standard public library often go downhill very fast once the motivating individual or small group of users leaves town or loses interest. Such libraries often become repositories for the discards from larger libraries and local attics, which are sometimes carefully cataloged and sitting in untouched glory on dusty shelves. Often, for untrained volunteers, a book is a book is a book, and with few ties to the library world or the broader concepts of outreach and service to the whole community, they are likely to perceive a library primarily as a warehouse or a refuge for all stray volumes, however dated or irrelevant. Volunteers are, in any case, unlikely to last long, and even paid (though minimally so) staff tend to come and go, making any training efforts by a state library or other distant agency frustrating and of little long-term effect. It is a truism that those staff with the least training or educational background are also the least likely to participate voluntarily in any workshops or continuing education opportunities.

A different type of building use is represented by deposit collections placed in various types of public facilities. These collections may be handled by state libraries, regional or county systems, city libraries, or other agencies, and are usually serviced by a delivery van or bookmobile. They can be housed in almost any type of building—from post offices and crossroads groceries to nursing homes, churches, and doctors’ waiting rooms. Private homes have been utilized over the years, though one suspects that only close friends and next-door neighbors ever come to
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use them. Normally, the collections are on a help-yourself arrangement, with provision for sign-out and return. The books are totally at the mercy of the host facility, since library staff may only be able to inspect or exchange the collection once or twice a year. All too often the deposits are neglected by both public and the local caretaker and end up either moldering under last year's garden seeds, stashed in cardboard boxes, or totally lost. A single interested individual—say, a nurse in a health clinic—can make all the difference between benign neglect and active use, by providing the enthusiasm to encourage potential readers to use the collection and the feedback to library staff regarding user needs and interests. However, if and when this individual leaves, the collection is likely to revert to an unattractive and unused pile of old best sellers. Respondents to the bookmobile questionnaire regarded deposit collections as a relatively undesirable method of service, with many books lost and little chance for patron contact or feedback. A few, however, foresaw their expansion in the future, if bookmobile service has to be reduced due to high costs of gasoline.

Such small outlets stand a much better chance of survival and of having an impact on the community if they are tied to a county or regional system. Then there is at least the opportunity for regular consulting from headquarter's staff; regular exchange or enrichment of the collection from the headquarter's shelves; more opportunity for interlibrary loan; shared use of films, records, audiovisual hardware, and other equipment which would be impossible for these outlets to purchase on their own; and access to the system's broader reference and bibliographic tools. Coe has provided a useful overview of rural needs in a cooperative. The number of totally independent small community libraries probably declines each year as more are pulled into some sort of library cooperative, and in most cases, the results are positive for all concerned. The increase of kiosk-type prefabricated structures, relatively inexpensive and easy to set up, is likely to continue and provides a good solution to building and construction complications if a community or system has money to invest in staff and collection.

Fortunately, several recent developments suggest more investigation of rural libraries and delivery systems in the near future. The Clarion State College (Pennsylvania) School of Library Science established the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship in 1978; useful research should be forthcoming from the center, as well as workshops and courses which will allow participants to share concerns and ideas. In summer 1979 the University of Denver Graduate School of Librarianship sponsored a week-long Institute on Training for Library Change,
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providing basic professional training for rural library directors who must respond to changes in their community as a result of mineral and energy developments and choice of rural lifestyle. The thirty participants from five western states are returning for a follow-up week in December; the first session was said to be very well received. ALA's Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged now has a small subcommittee on Library Services to the Rural Poor and Appalachian Peoples.

In conjunction with preparation of this paper, a minisurvey was made via three questionnaires concerning bookmobiles, books-by-mail, and programming, of a cross section of libraries nationwide which were believed to be involved in either books-by-mail or bookmobile services, or both. These libraries were requested to send any of the questionnaires on to other libraries in their area, as appropriate. A list of the twenty-three libraries in seventeen states replying is included in the appendix to this article. They represent a small sample of libraries serving rural areas, from statewide operations to single-county libraries. While this sample is far from all-inclusive, the responses provide a sense of the scope and direction of rural programming and delivery systems today and suggest a few questions. The data gathered are listed below. Questions are italicized.

RURAL BOOKMOBILE SERVICE

Eighteen questionnaires were returned.

1. Is your agency a city, county, regional, or state system?
   City, 1; county, 4; regional, 10; state, 3.

2. How many bookmobiles are in use in your system?
   Total, 57; range, 1-22; average, 3.2; median, 2.

3. How long have they been in use?
   Range, 4-32 years; average, 16.6 years; median, 16.5 years.

4. Approximate percentage of your bookmobile patrons who also use one of the following: public library, school library, small community library, books-by-mail, college or junior college library, or no other library service:
   (12 responses)
   Public library (11 responses): range, 5%-95%; average, 30%; median, 20%.
   School library (8 responses): range, 2%-75%; average, 40%; median, 40%.
   Small community library (6 responses): range, 2%-20%; average, 11.4%; median, 10%.
   Books-by-mail (7 responses): range, 1%-50%; average, 22.2%; median, 20%.
College or junior college library (5 responses): range 1%-25%; average, 5.6%; median, 5%.
No other library service (10 responses): range, 5%-94%; average, 50%; median, 52.5%.

5. **Approximate number of people within the bookmobile service area:** (17 responses)
   Range, 4,000-800,000; average, 147,458; median, 63,700.

5. **Approximate percentage of these who would be classified as rural:**
   Range, 22%-100%; average, 69.7%; median, 75%.

6. **Approximate number of registered bookmobile patrons:** (11 responses; several do not maintain registrations)
   Total, 89,364; range, 105-29,000; average, 8,124; median, 3,000.

7. **Approximate bookmobile circulation per year:** (16 responses)
   Total, 2,790,022 books; range, 4,800-456,000; average, 174,376; median, 41,500.

8. **Average number of miles traveled by bookmobiles each year:** (15 responses)
   Total, 792,256; range, 4,800-456,000; average, 52,817; median, 20,000.

9. **Approximate total cost of the bookmobile operation, including salaries and maintenance, but excluding any depreciation fund set aside for purchase of new vehicles:** (15 responses)
   Total, $1,018,715 spent per year; range $4,000-$350,000; average $67,914; median, $45,000.

10. **Approximate percentages of adult and juvenile patrons who use the bookmobile:** (12 responses)
    Range, 5% adult/95% juvenile-75% adult/25% juvenile; average, 44% adult/54% juvenile; median, 42.5% adult/57.5% juvenile.

10. **Approximate percentages of adult and juvenile circulation on the bookmobile:** (13 responses)
    Range, 25% adult/75% juvenile-83% adult/17% juvenile; average, 51.3% adult/47.8% juvenile; median, 50% adult/50% juvenile.

11. In addition to books, does your bookmobile circulate any of the following: magazines; cassettes; records; pamphlets; art prints; free, giveaway materials; or other?
   10 circulate magazines; 8, cassettes; 9, records; 8, pamphlets; 5, art prints; and 7, free materials; “other” included kits, toys, filmstrips, films, patterns, and recipes.

12. What percentage of total book collection (on the bookmobile) is paperbacks? (16 responses)
    Range, 0-50%; average, 14.1%; median, 5%.

13. Do you provide any of the following services on the bookmobile: ready reference, information and referral, interlibrary loan, direct hookup to central facility via shortwave radio or other electronic transmission, copying service, or other?
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Ready reference, 3; information and referral, 9; interlibrary loan, 16; direct hookup, 0; copying, 1; “other” services, 0.

14. Does the bookmobile provide regularly scheduled programs, or occasional programming to community groups? If so, what types of programs are presented (storytelling, puppet shows, book talks, movies/filmstrips, cooperative programs with a local agency, other), and at what audiences are they aimed?

Regular programs: yes, 5; no, 11. Occasional programs: yes, 7; no, 5. Types: storytelling, 3; puppet shows, 3; book talks, 4; movies/filmstrips, 5; cooperative programs with a local agency, 3; summer reading clubs for children, 4. “Other” included exhibits at schools and scout camps; information on welfare, careers, consumer, crafts, and other self-help topics. Audiences: adults, children, young adult groups, farm clubs, schools, nursing homes, Head Start, senior citizen centers, and Alcoholics Anonymous.

15. Please describe any innovative programs you have initiated with the bookmobile which have been particularly useful in reaching the rural disadvantaged. (4 responses)

1. Mailing book requests as soon as possible after returning to home base.
2. Having large-print books for the elderly.
3. Creating on the bookmobile a job information center, a social and health information file, a community information center, a human resources information file, and a government documents collection.
4. Regular contacts and coordination with local agencies; stops at senior citizen lunch programs, health clinics, and community action centers; use of large numbers of easy-reading survival skills materials.

16. Are books arranged on the bookmobile by Dewey Decimal, subject category, or other system of classification?

Dewey Decimal, 15; subject category, 3 (1 noted use of standard categories of mysteries, westerns, science fiction, romance); “other,” 0.

17. What are the most requested materials on the bookmobile? List in order of demand, number 1 being highest.

15 categories were given, and space provided for “other” (which none marked. Average ranking is shown in parentheses:

1. best sellers (2) cooking and sewing (7.4)
2. light romances (2.2) teen and young adult (8.6)
3. westerns, mysteries, science fiction (3) contemporary issues (9.5)
4. juvenile (4.7) health and family (9.5)
5. sports and hobbies (6.5) biography (9.6)
6. local and regional history (7) classics (fiction and nonfiction) (10.9)
7. arts and crafts (7.4) career and job skills (12.6)
8. homemaking, home repair, foreign language (14.2)

18. Do you charge fines?

Yes, 4; no, 12.

19. Do the handicapped have access to your bookmobile via folding ramp, mechanical lift, or other means?
Yes, 0. I noted a ramp being built on a bookmobile still in production; I noted the crew took books to handicapped patrons; I noted referral to the local library for the blind and physically handicapped.

20. a. How many deposit collections does your bookmobile maintain? In what types of facilities are they located? List advantages and disadvantages.

Total, 89. Facilities: elementary schools, schools for the retarded, school libraries, public and community libraries, churches, service stations, groceries, county jails, minimum security facilities, warehouses, offices, post offices, Job Corps centers, rest homes and nursing homes, nutrition centers, private homes, forest service outposts, national monument headquarters, health clinics, and Indian tribal centers.

Advantages (in order of frequency of citation):
1. Always there, easy access for patrons, convenient for children, good for isolated communities, provide reading matter for the people who can’t get to the bookmobile, good way to serve the aged and handicapped.
2. Inexpensive maintenance.
3. Well appreciated, good public relations.
4. Good supplement to the collection for small libraries with inadequate book budgets.

Disadvantages:
1. Books lost.
2. Lack of trained staff to maintain; no one wants to be responsible.
3. Low profile, low interest, poor facilities for display, books look uninviting.
4. No contact with patrons; hard to second-guess their interests.

20. b. Do you anticipate expanded or decreased use of deposit collections in the next 5 years?

Expanded, 4; might expand, 4; no plans to expand, 1; decreased, 4.

Comments:
"We are presently investigating the possibility of using deposit collections if one of our bookmobiles needs replacing and we do not have sufficient funds."
"The number of deposit collections will probably go up because the cost of running a bookmobile is getting ridiculous."
"No expansion—will initiate books-by-mail."
"Our recent experience, which we expect to continue, is to add stations in the areas of concentrated population (e.g., nursing homes, senior citizens’ apartments) and decrease those available to the general public."
"Will add as necessary, due to high bookmobile costs, but experience shows only a few are really viable and need much coordination to work."
"[Direct circulation] seems to work better than deposits. It helps keep books in circulation rather than being stuck in a deposit."
"Probably will have to increase."
"Deposit stations are a lousy form of service."
"Like pouring books down a rat hole—terrible losses!"

21. a. Does your bookmobile serve public schools?

Yes, 12; no, 4.
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21. b. _If_ so, _are the stops scheduled during school for classroom use, or for after-school or recess browsing?_ 
   Both, 1; classroom stops, 6; after-school stops, 2.

22. _What do you consider the major advantages of bookmobile service for your area?_ 
   Replies (grouped in order of frequency):
   1. Reaches a segment of the population that would not be able to get to a regular library; patrons don't have to travel to the main library; can serve outlying areas where there is little or no opportunity for library service; serve the many low-income or retired people who have only one car or no car; can take the service almost anywhere; the only way to deliver any kind of real service in a rural situation.
   2. Patrons can examine books directly; personal contact with patrons is valuable; can know and anticipate needs of patrons; close ties with rural families build over the years.
   3. Reach a sector of the population that would not use a regular library; psychologically easier to walk into a bookmobile than into a traditional library building; informality and friendliness appeals to all ages.
   4. Excellent public relations; good demonstration of library service in area without any; patrons very supportive and don't mind paying taxes for it.
   5. Can supplement the meager resources in area schools and public libraries.

23. _What are the major problems associated with your bookmobile service?_ 
   Replies (grouped in order of frequency of citation):
   1. High cost of maintenance and repair; increasing operation costs; high cost of gas; terrain hard on vehicles.
   2. Breakdowns disrupt schedule; staff often untrained in preventive maintenance or emergency repairs; maintenance problems; winter weather problems.
   3. Stops too brief; difficult to serve working people; difficult to find a time that many people can come in rural areas.
   4. Collection limited.
   5. Book loss high due to shifting population.

24. _Do you anticipate that within the next five years you will add additional units, replace existing units, cut back on bookmobile service, or disband the service entirely? If the last, how do you plan to serve patrons formerly served by the bookmobile?_
   Add units, 2; replace existing ones, 9; cut back, 4; would “keep it the same,” 2; “possibly go to all books-by-mail,” 1; might disband service entirely and expand the books-by-mail program, 1; “exploring various possibilities,” 1.

25. _In light of rising fuel and maintenance costs, potential fuel shortages, general citizen anger with governmental spending, and possible budget cutbacks, do you think bookmobiles are rapidly becoming an obsolete form of library service, or do you see a resurgence of bookmobile activity as an appropriate means of serving isolated communities whose citizens may become increasingly dependent upon services brought to them due to_
restrictions in their personal income, gas use, and mobile lifestyle? Please comment.

Responses included strong support for continuation of bookmobiles, guarded optimism, on the fence, and those who have written them off and see books-by-mail as the future means of delivery for rural areas; several did not answer. Answers are grouped into the following categories:

**Strongly supportive of the continuation of bookmobiles:** "We see a resurgence of bookmobile service."

"I think it will become more important because people will find it more usable if they don't have so many choices open to them."

"Our bookmobile operation costs about $10,000 per year for the regular big model. The only alternative to the bookmobile would be 2 or 3 minibranches in isolated areas; operation costs would be at least $30,000/year. Patrons in rural areas do not usually have the mobility to use such facilities. Considering patron expense for travel to the branches, we believe the bookmobile is the most economically viable."

**Guarded optimism:** "As for the bookmobile becoming obsolete, how expressive many of my tax-paying customers are in regard to the bookmobile being one of the few services they are grateful for. I hope finances will permit a continuation."

"In areas as geographically large as ours, bookmobiles still serve a purpose. Much of this function could be replaced by mail-a-book catalogs or kiosk libraries, however. Our bookmobiles currently return to a stop every 2 weeks; this could probably be cut to once a month without any great decline in level of service."

"People here will continue to support bookmobile service. I can also see mail-a-book helping if gas gets too high. However, people prefer to select a book physically rather than read about it and order it."

"Do not see how bookmobiles can be totally removed in this area. Certainly a cutback will come. Probably will be used in combination with mail service and/or homebound service. These isolated communities must have some service taken to them."

"Bookmobiles play a special role in isolated areas, providing a voice from the outside, a warm and friendly concern; their appearance is a social occasion in many small towns. In a state like New Mexico they provide opportunity for browsing and gentle encouragement by the bookmobile librarian, important with rural people such as our Indian and Spanish-speaking people whose backgrounds are nonliterate or who have had very little contact with books or libraries. I hope with careful scheduling they will continue to deliver materials and services across the desert, mesas, and mountains."

**On the fence:** "Difficult to tell which way citizen interest will go. Biggest problem is the high cost of replacing either bookmobile, should that become necessary."

"We've had no problems getting fuel, but the price has been high. I like to think bookmobiles can be justified because it saves people from using their own cars, but I know many of our patrons use other libraries too. This does
not consider the problems of the small public libraries and the rural schools, however. We have fairly good citizen support, at least among our users. Even a nonuser told us that she didn’t mind spending tax dollars for libraries.”

“Bookmobile circulation has fallen off in our rural area recently, apparently for a variety of reasons. One may be that it is now too expensive to drive to meet the bookmobile. Another may be that because so many women have returned to work they are no longer there when the bookmobile visits their community. All of our present stops are during daytime hours. It may be necessary to begin evening and weekend stops to recapture patrons. If that fails we may have to consider alternative service, since it is difficult to justify a service where the cost per circulation exceeds the cost of many paperback books.”

“With rising gas prices and the cost of repairing the now 6-year-old vehicle escalating, bookmobile service costs increase each year. Bookmobile routes and stops must be examined regularly to ensure that the many communities receive adequate coverage and that the stops themselves are effective. Studies should begin now to determine if bookmobile service will be feasible in the future and what the alternatives may be.”

Obsoletely dying out: “I believe bookmobiles are becoming obsolete. Even the state library in West Virginia tends to discourage bookmobile use. They would rather see small outpost libraries.”

One respondent circled the questionnaire phrase “bookmobiles are rapidly becoming an obsolete form of library service.”

“Services by mail are more realistic in Alaska.”

What do these data suggest? Because libraries varied in size and scope of operations, the responses ranged widely from small county operations to three statewide systems (Alaska, Utah, and New Mexico); this confirms the fact that rural delivery systems are not easily separable as such and are usually tied to a larger county, regional, or even statewide operation. The number of bookmobiles in use varies from one in Fayette County, West Virginia, to twenty-two in Utah. Most operations had been around for a while, with Pender County, North Carolina (thirty-two years) being the oldest, and Arrowhead, Minnesota (four years), the youngest. The average age of 16.6 years may be greater since a few respondents may have misinterpreted the question to mean “age of the bookmobiles themselves” rather than “time span of the operation.”

The range of patrons using other library services is quite interesting. Few replied to this question, so the data are spotty but suggest that for a fair number of rural people, the bookmobile is the major or only source of public library service: an average of 50 percent have no other service, only 30 percent use a public library, and 11 percent, a small community library. Only five libraries thought any of their patrons
used a college or junior college library and the average percentage of those who did was 5.6, suggesting that many rural areas still have no college-level continuing education facilities, and/or that some local colleges are reluctant to open their doors to public use. Overlap of bookmobile and books-by-mail services is evident; 22.2 percent used both (obviously in areas where both were available), which is not surprising since these partial services complement each other. School library use seemed low (only eight of twelve marked it at all) and the average of 40 percent using such service is lower than the average percentage of juvenile patrons (54 percent). Some rural schools still have very minimal libraries and few trained librarians, which may account for limited use of school libraries. The number of people in the service area, of course, varied widely from 4000 in the several areas served by the 2 Alaska state bookmobiles, to the 800,000 rural residents in Utah. The average of 69.8 percent rural residents in the service area is not high, considering the sample chosen for the questionnaire survey. However, four systems had a service area which was 100 percent rural.

Registered borrowers varied from 105 in Goshen County, Wyoming, to 29,000 in Arrowhead, Minnesota. Seven did not reply to this question, indicating they do not keep registration statistics. Book circulation was also a broad span, ranging from the 2970 books by the 2 Alaska summer-only bookmobiles, to 1,926,890 across rural areas of Utah; the median of 41,500 is impressive considering these are rural statistics; the average yearly circulation is 21.4 books per patron.

The cost figures are probably not meaningful since there are so many ways of computing the cost of a bookmobile operation if it is part of a larger system. The range from $4000 (Goshen County, Wyoming) to $350,000 (New Mexico) is wide, and would have been wider if the biggest operation surveyed (Utah) had answered this question. The 792,256 total miles traveled by the 57 bookmobiles in the survey averages only 13,899 miles per bookmobile—many miles, but about what a passenger car might do in a year. In fact, one criticism of bookmobiles in the past has been the amount of time they are parked at headquarters compared to the time in the field.

The higher average percentage of juvenile patrons (54 percent versus adult patrons (44 percent) shows that in many areas bookmobiles still serve a primarily school-age clientele. The ratio would probably have been even higher several years ago, though no figures could be found to support this. New Mexico, for example, deliberately stopped most school service about four years ago—a policy designed both to encourage development of better libraries in the rural schools and to
eliminate long lines of schoolchildren pushing though the bookmobile. This system began concentrating on seeking out the adults in the community—a more difficult task since they are not the captive audience the schoolchildren were, but one with gratifying results. Now patrons are primarily adults (except in summer), who seek a wide variety of “how to” materials as well as recreational reading. The closer range of circulation (51.4 percent juvenile to 47.8 percent adult) suggests either that children are reading a lot of adult books or that adults check out more books per patron.

Four operations indicated their bookmobiles carried only books. Only slightly over half carried magazines, about half carried cassettes, records or pamphlets, and only seven carried giveaway materials. More startling, in light of the expense of hardbound books and space limitations of a bookmobile, were the small percentages of paperbacks used. Two operations reported using no paperbacks, two had only 1 percent paperback books, one had 3 percent, four had 5 percent, three had 10 percent, one had 30 percent, one had 40 percent, and two had 50 percent—none had more than one-half paperbacks! Two said figures were not available.

Only three respondents provide ready reference service, though half provide some kind of information and referral (a pleasant surprise), and sixteen provide interlibrary loans. While one had copying service, none had a direct hookup with a central facility and none mentioned any other type of service. Programming provided was quite slim—only five of the eighteen (27 percent) had regularly scheduled programs, and seven (39 percent) put on occasional programs. Apparently many bookmobiles have not kept pace with the innovative outreach ideas and services designed to reach the urban disadvantaged or even the suburban housewife. Often they are at the bottom of the heap, administratively and fiscally, in a large system and perhaps supervisors are not expected or encouraged to experiment with new practices. Maybe the great public rush to books-by-mail is attributable in part to the freshness and popular appeal of all-paperback collections, as contrasted with the somewhat dowdy, hardcover collections (sometimes not even jacketed) found on many bookmobiles.

Only four of eighteen described “innovative” programs to reach the rural disadvantaged; one indicated simply more efficient service; another listed an addition to the collection; thus, only two (11 percent) have directed much attention to this sector—or perhaps some approaches were thought too common or unsuccessful efforts considered unworthy of mention.
The large majority—fifteen of seventeen—use a standard Dewey Decimal arrangement. Since bookmobiles don't normally carry card catalogs, finding books arranged by a numerical classification system can be haphazard for all but the most regular library users, and the librarian must make sure patrons get what they need. For this reason, a category system was designed for some of the bookmobiles in New Mexico, with each section of shelf labeled specifically for one of the approximately twenty-five categories chosen. While this system may not be applicable everywhere, it is surprising that more libraries have not experimented with color-coding or category arrangement.

The listing of materials in order of demand is probably quite typical of small public libraries. It is interesting to note, however, that classics and biography, considered “staples” in even the smallest library collections, were low on the list. Demand for career materials might increase if collections were better, particularly in this era of continuing education and second-career decisions.

Only four (25 percent) of the sixteen respondents to Question 18 charge fines. Most libraries appear to have decided that intervals between visits and short stops make fine assessment an impossible, if not unfair, burden on staff and patrons.

Despite recent national focus on the handicapped, none of the systems has handicapped facilities for their bookmobiles, though one such bookmobile is being manufactured for New Mexico. Most bookmobiles in use were probably built long before this was an area of concern, and sparse rural population has made access for the handicapped less of an issue than in some urban areas.

The eighteen operations maintain a total of eighty-nine deposit collections, or an average of almost five per program, and additional deposits may be handled through other departments in the system. The practicality of deposit collections as a form of rural delivery is discussed elsewhere in this article.

Two-thirds of the bookmobiles serve public schools, suggesting that a good number of rural schools still have inadequate libraries and need supplementary services.

Responses to Questions 24 and 25 indicate both current indecision about the service, and the belief that it is still, for the foreseeable future, an important delivery system for rural areas. While two operations will add units, nine will replace existing ones; two will continue with the same units, and one wrote “no” beside all possibilities given, suggesting that they, too, were keeping the same units. As noted, four are planning to cut back. Though no one said they would disband entirely, one said
"maybe," one is exploring various possibilities, and one may go to all books-by-mail. The comments ranged from satisfaction with the operation to serious questionings about its feasibility in a future of high gas and maintenance costs. It is this author's belief that the future of bookmobiles will hinge not only on this cost factor, but on effectiveness of service and its value to rural patrons. If the bookmobile is still perceived by many as a children's service or a carrier of novels, its demise may be lamented, but the transition to books-by-mail will be relatively painless. However, if it provides services crucial to rural residents—in terms of information resources useful to their daily lives, including data on agency services available in the area, ready reference and materials circulated in a variety of formats—and if schedules can be revised to be as efficient as possible in terms of reaching the largest number of citizens with the least expenditure of gas, then the public may not allow it to die.

**RURAL BOOKS-BY-MAIL SERVICES**

Fifteen questionnaires were returned; a compilation of replies follows.

1. **Is your library city, county, regional, state, or other?**
   - County, 3; regional, 10; state, 2.

2. **How long has your books-by-mail program been in existence?**
   - Total, 15; range, 5 mos.-7 yrs.; average, 3.7 yrs.; median, 4 yrs.

3. **Who is eligible to receive the service?**
   - All county/regional residents, 5; all rural residents, 1; all rural residents and shut-ins, 1; all rural route residents and those in towns with no libraries, 5; anyone who can't get to a regular library, 1; rural residents not living in a qualified library taxing district, 1; schools, libraries, individuals in rural areas, 1.

4. **a. Approximate number of citizens within your service area: (14 responses)**
   - Total, 1,893,003; range, 9,000-411,711; average, 126,200; median, 85,000.

4. **b. Approximate percentage of these classified as rural?**
   - Range, 37%-100%; average, 67.3%; median, 70%.

5. **a. How many registered books-by-mail patrons do you have? (14 responses, 3 do not keep registration statistics)**
   - Total, 19,325; average, 1,757; median, 1,500.

5. **b. Are the actual number of patrons served larger than this figure, i.e., does one family member tend to sign up and receive books for the whole family or do most people sign up individually?**
Sign-up was by family, not by individual, 8 (1 noted that people were "supposed" to sign up this way); sign-up individually, 3; unsure, 1; no registration data, 3.

6. **Approximate percentage of your books-by-mail patrons who have access to no other type of library service, who use a public library, college, or junior college library, bookmobile, school library, or other type of library:** (6 responses)
   Of the 5 who checked the first category: range, 2%-75%; average, 21%; median, 10%. All 6 checked the public library: range, 5%-75%; average, 39%; median, 45%. Only 3 specified that their patrons used a college or junior college library: range 1%-50%; average, 19%; median, 5%. 4 noted bookmobile use: range, 1%-50%; average, 35%; median, 45%. 3 checked school library use: range, 10%-50%; average, 25%; median, 15%. Other, 0.

7. **Approximate annual books-by-mail circulation:** (14 responses)
   Total, 377,166; range, 700-100,000; average, 26,940; median, 15,026.

8. **Approximate annual cost of the total books-by-mail program:** (13 responses)
   Range $500-$50,000; average, $21,408; median, $15,000.

9. **Number of full-time staff employed in the program:**
   Range, 0-5, average, 1.5; median, 1.

10. **a. Approximate cost per circulation:** (11 responses)
    Range, $0.44-$2.29; average, $1.12; median, $1.04.

10. **b. Approximate cost per patron:** (10 responses)
    Range, $0.10-$13.00; average, $12.16; median, $13.00.

11. **Is your book collection a separate entity, or part of the regular collection?**
    Separate collection, 13; part of regular collection, 2.

12. **Do you take reserves for titles in the books-by-mail collection?**
    Yes, 5; no, 10.

13. **Do you fill requests for information on titles not in the books-by-mail collection?**
    Yes, 13; no, 2.

14. **a. Do you produce your own catalog or use a commercial service?**
    Produce own catalog, 3; commercial service, 14 (includes 2 using a combination).

14. **b. How often do you issue a new catalog and how many titles does each catalog contain?**
    The frequency seemed to be predominantly 1 annual catalog with 3 supplements, for a total of 900-1,200 titles per year. 1 agency produced a catalog every 2-3 months; 1, quarterly; 1, semiannually; and 1, every 3 years. Number of titles per catalog varied from 600-800 for the commercially produced; and for in-house produced, the range was from 75 titles for the catalog published every 2-3 months to 3,000 titles for the 3-year catalog.

15. **a. How have you advertised the books-by-mail service?**
Responses included radio, TV, county fairs, rural school districts, posters, bookmobiles, libraries, word-of-mouth, newspaper articles, and mass mailing of catalogs to all residents in a given area.

15. b. What seems to be the best method of publicity?
Word-of-mouth was most frequently mentioned, followed by public service announcements on radio and TV, and catalog mass mailing. (One frustrated librarian wrote, "I wish I knew!")

16. What are the main advantages of your books-by-mail program?
Replies are grouped according to frequency of citation:
1. Convenience to patron; patron need not worry about library hours or bookmobile schedules.
2. Reaches those not near a library or bookmobile stop; allows service in sparsely populated areas where bookmobiles or libraries are too expensive to maintain; provides service to working people who can't meet the bookmobile or get to a library during its open hours.
3. Reaches people who were previously not users, who would not take the time to use regular public library service, or who perhaps feel uncomfortable in a regular library.
4. Provides service to the elderly, homebound, and shut-ins who could not utilize any other type of service.
5. Cheaper than bookmobile service.
6. Very good public relations for the whole agency; patrons very appreciative of the service.

17. What do you feel are the major problems associated with the program?
Replies ranked in order of frequency:
1. U.S. Postal Service.
2. Not enough use; hard to reach all eligible patrons.
3. Lack of personal contact with patron; lack of personalized information service.
4. Limited selection of books; heavy demand for certain titles; hard to guess which items will become high in demand, requiring additional copies.
5. Costs of postage, books, and service.
6. Provides only recreational reading; not for serious readers or students.
7. Inadequate circulation controls; hard to get books back on time; hard to collect fines.

18. Do you anticipate you will expand the program, keep it the same, or cut back in the next 5 years?
Expand, 9; keep it the same, 5; cut back, 1.

19. What areas of the collection seem to be in the highest demand? Please rank numerically. (Average ranking is in parentheses.)
1. recreational (1.7)
2. best sellers (2.2)
3. "how to" and survival skills (3.3)
4. juvenile and teen (4)
5. job training, school, or self-study related (5.4)
6. local history and culture (5.6)
7. contemporary issues (5.8)
20. Do patrons view books-by-mail as primarily recreational reading, as 50/50 recreation and information, as primarily an information service, or other? Recreational, 8; 50/50 recreation/information, 6; 75% recreation/25% information, 1; information, other, 0.

21. Please add any comments you may have about books-by-mail in general and its role as a library delivery system in the next 5 years. Comments fell into the following areas:

Expansion: "I expect the service to expand considerably—ultimately to make the total holdings of the library system available through the delivery system, to include interlibrary loan and reference."

"Was funded by state and local government subdivision at $2.00/person in service area. Program will now be expanded to serve 50,000 people."

"This service will expand because of the energy crisis and rising costs of bookmobile operation."

"Books-by-mail will increase rapidly in the next 5 years. It is the best program for reaching rural residents."

"This service will have to increase as rural transportation problems increase. Postal rates will be an increasing problem."

Possible expansion: "If the energy crisis continues and if gas keeps getting more expensive, I think more people will start using this sort of program. One can send a sack of books more cheaply than one can travel 10 miles to the library."

Generally pleased: "Response has been gratifying from widely scattered residents who appreciate the 'library in your mailbox.' Shaped as we are, so 'strung out,' the saving in gas is a big plus for the mail-a-book program."

"This was begun in the absence of bookmobile service until the bus was back on the road. Now we have bookmobile and MAB. Paperbacks are so popular that we can serve both needs with the one paper collection and continually have new items available. Probably will try to keep both services going."

New facets to be added: "We are going to attempt to put out specialized catalogs, i.e., juvenile, local history, 'best of MAB,' etc. We've also had a very minor cassettes-by-mail program which I would like to expand greatly to include popular music."

"For a large state like Alaska it is a necessary way to get library materials to people who want the service. Feedback from mail patrons indicates that a catalog annotating available books and other materials would be the most satisfactory."

What do these figures tell us? Despite the small sample of fifteen libraries, it is hoped that they represent, as do the bookmobile replies, a reasonable cross section of rural operations across the country, from small county operations (e.g., Goshen County, Wyoming; Delaware County, Iowa) to regional systems (Arrowhead, Minnesota; the Texas Panhandle) to statewide operations (Alaska and New Mexico). At 3.71
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years, books-by-mail service is relatively young compared to the average bookmobile operations age of 16.6 years. One-third of the respondents allow anyone in the service area to participate; two-thirds restrict it to basically rural residents and those in small towns without libraries, with allowances for shut-ins anywhere. There seems to be no correlation between the percentage of rural residents in the service area and restriction of service to this group. In any case, people having easy access to a public library would probably be unlikely to use books-by-mail. Choong Kim notes: "Even in the most unrestricted, postage-free, urban BBM program, total BBM circulation is not likely to grow to more than 2 or 3 percent of the library's total circulation.... In urban areas where access to library facilities is no problem to most people, the unrestricted BBM program actually functions as an emergency backup library service to those who find library visits impractical, inconvenient, or impossible. Not surprisingly, people prefer walk-in use of library over BBM."

In New Mexico, perhaps one or two requests a month are received from urban residents for books-by-mail service. Requests are only honored from those who cannot get to the local library (and if it does not offer homebound services) and a letter is sent to the local librarian stating that a potential patron has inquired about the program. It is surprising how many townspeople are unaware of their local libraries services.

The population of the service area showed a wide range, though not as broad as the bookmobile span, of from 9000 in Holdridge, Nebraska, to 411,711 in Alaska. The percentage of rural residents was practically the same—67.3, compared with 69.8 percent for the bookmobile populations—not remarkable, since a number of operations surveyed provided both services to essentially the same population. The average number of patrons registered, 1757, is considerably lower than the bookmobile service average of 8124—not surprising since the program is so much younger (in each case, eleven libraries supplied this figure; the number who do not keep registration statistics is surprising). The eight of eleven (73 percent) who register borrowers primarily by family further indicates that standard data such as circulation and registration statistics do not tell the whole story. Had this question been included in the bookmobile survey, probably over 50 percent of bookmobile patrons would be found to check out books not just for themselves but for family members and/or neighbors and friends.

The very small number (six) of responses to Question 6 makes the answers statistically unreliable, but nonetheless noteworthy. A considerably smaller percentage of the books-by-mail patrons (21 percent)
have access to no other library service, compared with 50 percent for patrons of bookmobile service. A higher percentage (39 percent versus 30 percent) use a public library. The range of use of college and junior college libraries in the three responses to this category was so great (1 percent, 5 percent, 50 percent) that the average of 19 percent is meaningless, but certainly suggests that few colleges and junior colleges are located in the areas where books-by-mail patrons live. The average percentage of books-by-mail patrons using bookmobile service (35 percent) is higher than the 22.2 percent of bookmobile patrons using books-by-mail. With such small numbers replying this may mean little, and is a function of availability of both services. Does it suggest that where a bookmobile is still available more books-by-mail patrons like to keep that browsing option open? School library use was lower than for bookmobile patrons (25 percent versus 40 percent); probably fewer books-by-mail users are children. The ratio of adult versus juvenile use was not solicited on the books-by-mail questionnaire, so cannot be compared, but it seems generally that school-age children are not heavy users of books-by-mail; young children especially probably need to be attracted by the actual look and feel of a book. Circulation range was wide though again not as broad as with the bookmobiles', from 700 in the newly-initiated Monroe County operation, to 100,000 in the Choctaw Nation; the average (26,940) was not as high as the bookmobile average, but the program is newer and the replies fewer.

Annual costs varied greatly from $500 in South Mississippi Regional, to $50,000 for the Arrowhead Library System. Average cost ($21,408), as expected, is much less than average bookmobile cost ($67,914)—postage is cheaper than operating a large vehicle, and the overall scope of programs surveyed was smaller than that of bookmobile operations (judging by the other statistics such as registration and circulation). The average number of staff involved (only 1.6) suggests that a supplementary program of books-by-mail for individuals unable to use other library services can be handled by only one or two people. Undoubtedly, the bookmobile average would have been higher had the question been asked. The cost-per-circulation figures are fascinating, as are the costs per patron. Cost per circulation, interestingly, varies less ($0.44 in Clinch-Powell to $2.29 in New Mexico) than cost per patron ($0.10 in Clinch-Powell to $30.00 in Delaware County). Unfortunately, this question was not asked in the bookmobile survey, however, analysis of bookmobile costs, circulation, and registration data indicates that range of cost per circulation was from $0.21 in Northeast Colorado Regional library to $6.80 in Fayette County, West Virginia (average,
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$1.26, and median, $0.74). The bookmobile service cost per patron varied from $3.94 in Northeast Colorado to $68.85 in Pender County (average, $20.15, and median, $51.50).

The great majority (87 percent) who reported using a separate collection for books-by-mail is no surprise, since the most practical way of handling the service is a catalog with multiple copies of each title listed. In fact, Clinch-Powell Regional (one of the two indicating use of the regular collection) is primarily a books-by-mail service anyway, in terms of collection use. Alaska, which seems to provide packets of materials to rural schools, libraries, and individuals out of its regular collection, is apparently thinking of a catalog (and perhaps a separate collection).

Only one-third (five of fifteen) took reserves for titles in the books-by-mail collection, but given staffing levels it may simply be an unaffordable luxury for smaller operations. Still, almost all (87 percent) fill requests for information on titles not in the books-by-mail collection; without this avenue to other resources, books-by-mail could indeed become a self-limiting program. Although most libraries surveyed purchased a commercial service, the national average may be more like 50/50. A representative of the American Companies, Inc., producers of the Mail-a-Book service (and the only national commercial venture in this area) estimated that the company handled about 50 percent of the books-by-mail programs in the United States. Catalog purchase is easier for the library, but does not allow the flexibility of selecting materials relevant to the needs/interests of a clientele. In New Mexico, for example, a page of southwestern books (a highly popular item) and a page of Spanish-language titles are included. Two who have been using a commercial service (Arrowhead and Eastern Oklahoma) noted that they would be doing their own from now on. It may be that a commercial service best serves the needs of those starting a books-by-mail program. Arrowhead appears to be branching out, with special catalogs planned for juvenile, local history, "the best of MAB," cassettes, etc. A problem of any catalog, whatever its frequency and size, is that once an edition is published, the multiple copies of titles in the previous one become essentially inaccessible. Individual titles can be, and are recycled into new catalogs; nevertheless, the "old" collection is basically unused, except as substitutes or to fill requests from someone with an older catalog. As libraries with books-by-mail programs gain more experience, it will be interesting to see what they do with the growing collections of old titles.

Advertisement of a service is a perennial problem for libraries. Word-of-mouth was most frequently cited as the best means of publiciz-
ing books-by-mail. Particularly in a rural area, where people have always depended heavily on friends and neighbors for advice and information, a new service has much greater credibility if it is recommended by a trusted person rather than merely announced on the radio or in a newspaper. This is not to deny the positive effects of standard public relations methods, but suggests that reaching opinion leaders in small towns and rural areas could reap substantial benefits for any library service promoted.

Advantages and disadvantages of books-by-mail as well as general comments by respondents, speak for themselves. Given the economic and energy crunch, it is not surprising that nine of fifteen plan to expand their program to serve a broader clientele as families cut down their gas consumption and bookmobile operations are cut back. The system planning to curtail books-by-mail made the decision on the basis of its member libraries, i.e., that given inflation and with no increase in state/federal funding, the program to suffer should be the one of no direct benefit to libraries; as of this fiscal year, it provides books-by-mail only to the one county with no public library service within its boundaries.

The rankings of popularity of the various areas of the collection produced no major surprises. Since most respondents use the commercial service which would include little local history or culture, it is to be expected that this category would fall near the bottom, and perhaps it is only surprising that it is not last. "Contemporary issues" was also very low on the bookmobile ranking, suggesting that many rural citizens are too busy with their own concerns and needs to be interested in broader national or international issues, or perhaps they are simply disenchanted.

Almost as many (six versus eight) indicated that patrons considered books-by-mail as 50/50 recreational/informational or as a primarily recreational reading service. Though none viewed it as primarily informational, that day may come. Kim notes in a brief discussion of future trends in books-by-mail that: "the purpose of reading may change from leisure reading to practical information. In a number of programs, requests for materials in useful arts, hobbies, crafts, and other how-to-do-it information were the most popular of all the nonfiction requests."18 Libraries everywhere are probably experiencing heavy demand on "how to" collections, particularly in rural areas, where resources are few and fixing, growing, recycling, and creating are critical skills. It is a challenge to libraries to let the public know they carry these materials, as well as popular fiction and best sellers.
PROGRAMMING IN RURAL LIBRARIES

Eighteen questionnaires were returned; some regional libraries reported for individual libraries in the system, thus numbers may total more than eighteen.

1. a. Does your library provide programs for children, and if so, what?
   Storytelling: regularly, 18; occasionally, 3; never, 11.
   Puppet shows: regularly, 3; occasionally, 9; never, 17.
   Summer reading clubs: regularly, 18; occasionally, 4; never, 1.
   Movies/filmsstrips: regularly, 16; occasionally, 6; never, 10.
   RIF (Reading is Fundamental) giveaways: regularly, 1; occasionally, 2; never, 5.
   Creative drama: regularly, 0; occasionally, 6; never, 20.
   “How to” demonstrations by local experts: regularly, 2; occasionally, 8; never, 17.
   “Other” included exhibits, library tours, parent/child training courses regarding educational toys, “Biography of the Month” celebrations, art displays, watermelon feasts, programs for parents while children are at storyhour, community tours, guest speakers, and sidewalk painting contests.

1. b. Please comment on major benefits and problems encountered in programming with children.
   Problems:
   1. Not enough staff.
   2. Training volunteers.
   3. Not enough “new” ideas.
   4. Transportation to the library for children, except when schools are in the same proximity. Easier, for this reason, to work with groups like 4H and scouts.
   5. Scheduling conflicts with other programs, e.g., vacation Bible school, softball, and summer parks programs.
   6. Fluctuations in attendance, making continued projects (like arts and crafts) difficult.
   7. The “same” group, i.e., no “new” faces.
   8. Hardest to reach the neediest children, i.e., the very rural disadvantaged, even if one concentrates on the places where children are gathered, such as nursery schools and daycare centers.
   9. Parents who bring children late or pick them up late.
   Benefits:
   1. Reach the nonuser, including parents who bring children to a program.
   2. Children who come for a film show or program stay to check out books and use the library more.
   3. Summer programs keep children reading during the summer.
   4. Lives are enriched, and daycare centers, babysitters, etc. come to the library.
2. a. Does your library provide programs for adults, and if so, what?
   Book talks: regularly, 5; occasionally, 5; never, 20.
   Movies/films: regularly, 9; occasionally, 6; never, 17.
   ‘How to’ demonstrations by local experts: regularly, 3; occasionally, 7; never, 20.
   Continuing education courses through a local college: regularly, 2; occasionally, 4; never, 23.
   Literacy tutoring/training: regularly, 0; occasionally, 2; never, 26.
   Outside speakers on various topics: regularly, 4; occasionally, 7; never, 21.
   Local history: regularly, 3; occasionally, 9; never, 19.
   “Other” included special interest displays, regular discussion groups with adults and honor students from local high schools, art displays, coupon exchanges, take-out programs to clubs/civic groups, daily radio shows (3 minutes), weekly newspaper columns, cable TV (8 shows/mo.), cassette duplication centers.

2. b. Please comment on major benefits and problems encountered in programming with adults.
   Problems: poor response, conventional advertising ineffective, attendance not sustained over time.
   Benefits: brought in people who would not otherwise use the library.

3. a. Does your library provide special programming for specific groups?
   Young adults: regularly, 2; occasionally, 4; never, 22.
   Senior citizens: regularly, 8; occasionally, 5; never, 15.
   Other groups: mentally retarded, friends of the library, book clubs, homebound, archives society, county historical society.

3. b. List types of programs offered.
   Films at nutrition sites and rest homes, book delivery, exhibits, lectures and demonstrations, book talks, poster and essay contests, story hour for mentally retarded children, special section in library for young adults.

3. c. Comment on major benefits and problems encountered in programming with these special groups.
   Programs are family-style to appeal to all ages. Senior citizens who had never been aware of libraries before are being reached at nutrition sites. Young adults passed drugs and vandalized, but preventive measures have almost erased the problem.

4. Does your library, or other agency, provide transportation to any of its programs?
   No, 4; other, 4 (included volunteers, county vehicle, community action bus).

5. Please comment on advantages and disadvantages of programming in rural libraries:
   Advantages:
   1. Draws people to the library; sense of satisfaction to the librarian in making people happy; people who come are really interested.
   2. Few other entertainment sources, thus captive audience; people appreciate anything you can bring them.
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3. Makes library visible; attracts nonusers; once involved, people enjoy the library.
4. Community small enough that librarian knows clientele well; less overlapping of services and better communication.
5. Local newspapers generally advertise programs free of charge and run pictures or text on any newsworthy item.

Disadvantages:
1. Not cost-effective; audience too small to bring in outside programs or speakers.
2. Not interchangeable from one community to another, since interests are so varied.
3. Lack of a permanent building causes low visibility of the library and people don't think about coming for programs; small building limits size of audience, so one doesn't dare advertise too much.
4. Poor turnout; transportation problems; weather; population spread makes it difficult to find central location; sparse population limits audience; fluctuation in attendance prohibits continuing programs like crafts.
5. Lack of interest in programs advertised as “educational,” or in cultural activities other than rural interests.
6. People busy with own work except in winter; rural schools very full with activities.
7. Lack of staff time; often one-person libraries; lack of staff expertise; publicity takes much time; staffs feel that adults would not attend, so don’t explore possibilities.
8. Lack of funds.
9. New residents expect big-city services and complain.

Rural programming appears to differ only in degree, not kind, from programming in any public library. Typical of both are story hours, movies and filmstrips, puppet shows, “how to” demonstrations, and summer reading clubs for children; book talks, outside speakers, movies, local history projects and talks by experts in various fields for adults; and occasional special activities for young adults, senior citizens, nursing home residents, the mentally retarded, prisoners, etc. The difference probably lies in the number and scope of the programs.

Small libraries with minimal, often untrained staff, few resources and probably no meeting room have neither the time nor capability to plan and put on many programs. The sparse population and long distances to travel work against large audiences or sustained interest. However attractive the program, it must compete with many other chores and activities. Often, however, few other entertainment or social activities are available in rural areas, and once a program has caught on it can be an important community event. Knowing the clientele well can be useful in planning relevant programs.
A relatively new dimension in programming are the projects sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Although most proposals funded are from medium or large urban libraries, several projects they have funded for state libraries in the last few years have encompassed both large and small public libraries across the state, and have implications for systems in which small libraries have difficulty with program ideas and implementation on their own.

The Alabama State Library received $200,000 to produce six films, ten booklets, and a calendar on various aspects of the history, culture, and literature of the state. A group of humanities scholars were hired as consultants and part of their task was to visit every library in the state to offer help in putting on local programs and assisting the librarian in general to serve the community better. Rather than being a one-time event, it is hoped these ties between the public librarian and a nearby scholar will continue, and that the university humanities professor will be perceived as a source of assistance with programming or other relevant areas of library needs.

The Ohio State Library received a $174,000 grant to help public libraries around the state plan programming for out-of-school adults in the community. In addition to a group of Ohio scholars willing to help in public programming, the project staff were available for whatever consulting, public relations materials, etc. were needed by local librarians. One of the best programs to date to come out of the project was conceived for the small town of Pomeroy, whose energetic librarian Ellen Bell organized a one-hour riverboat trip for local citizens, with a scholar discussing the history of sites passed. Local agencies such as the senior citizens center were heavily involved in the planning; the event was so successful that future trips are planned involving other libraries in the area and emphasizing folk music of the region.

A variation on these two projects was the Indiana Library Association’s NEH grant of $118,895 for a “Humanist in Residence” program. Humanities scholars from various Indiana colleges and universities were hired to work six weeks in the summer with an individual public library. Duties included evaluating the collection in the area of the humanities, planning and conducting public programming, providing in-service training for library staff in the humanities, making themselves available to the public in the library as special consultants, establishing an informal interchange with the community, and assisting with any special projects such as a local history program. The smallest library involved was probably Ellwood Public Library, serving a population of 11,000, but the potential exists for work with even smaller towns.
One of the most exciting NEH library projects, in terms of rural libraries, was at the Alpha Regional Library in Spencer, West Virginia. A $50,000 grant provided impetus for a large number of local history projects in this very rural, three-county region on the western edge of Appalachia. Five workshops were held for the public on oral history, Appalachian folklore and folk music, genealogy, and the impact of technology; project staff wrote weekly articles for the local newspaper on aspects of local history, scheduled numerous speaking engagements at local clubs, and are now writing histories on two of the three counties. Each county was given 10 slots to bring in outside speakers on local historical/cultural topics; tape recorders were purchased for people to check out and use to make their own oral history tapes; 6000 old photographs were contributed to the library's collection; and a "Celebration Day," with old local movies, folk music and dance, poetry and prose, a bluegrass group, and a rededication of the library took place in July and attracted many people who had never been there before. Emphasis on family history and genealogy proved to be a key factor in attracting and maintaining the interest of local citizens. Spin-offs continue, e.g., the revitalization of the County Historical Society and the initiation of an Archaeological Society.

For rural people with a totally oral tradition, standard library programming and print activities will not work. NEH has recently funded a project of the University of New Mexico to increase adult library use at nine pueblos in New Mexico. A major aspect is identification in museum collections of early photographs made at the pueblos, and their reproduction and "return" to the pueblo, so that its people may better understand and appreciate their unique cultural background. In addition to these photographs, which will be exhibited at the pueblo libraries, copies of historical documents will be collected in a vertical file for research and archival purposes; various exhibits of the material culture of the pueblo, including comparisons of past and present, will be prepared; and local folk tales will be recorded and transcribed—all with the purpose of changing the library from a collection of basically print resources into a cultural center for the entire tribe. The local Indian librarians will be trained in collection, archival, museum, and photographic techniques at local museums, at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, and at the Newberry Library Center for the History of the American Indian in Chicago, and there they will select documents and photographs to bring back.

Other examples of programs coming out of rural situations—or appropriate to them—include that of the Santa Fe County bookmobile,
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which traveled in conjunction with a local college’s mobile theater company as it performed its summer schedule in the small villages of northern New Mexico; and a school/public library cooperative effort in the small town of Abington, Pennsylvania, where a modest LSCA grant was used to convert a school mobile guidance unit into a summer bookmobile program providing story hours, movies, and books for children around the community.24

Many programs have had an educational slant (though, interestingly, literacy and continuing education programs received the fewest responses on the questionnaire). Rockingham County Library (Reidsville, North Carolina) used a van outfitted with movie projectors, tape recorders, record players, paintings, and books, which traveled to communities, inviting parents and children to come inside for programs, stories, and films—designed in particular to prepare preschoolers and their parents for the first year of school in this predominantly low-income area.25 Selma-Dallas County Public Library (Alabama) initiated Project ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Experience) with federal funds in 1978 on its bookmobile, to reach adults in outlying rural areas who could not read or write at a third-grade level. High-interest/easy-reading materials are carried on the bookmobile and an adult education teacher recruits undereducated adults living or working near the stops and works with them on an individual basis during each weekly visit.26

In a 1973 study on library needs of farm workers, Zonligt urged establishment of Survival Information Centers (SIC) in all rural communities where large numbers of migrant farm workers lived. He felt that normal book circulation activities of a public library were totally inadequate for Spanish-speaking workers with only a fourth or fifth-grade education, and for such basic information needs as: where do I get food, shelter, medical care, legal assistance, work, and learn enough English not to get taken by my boss or contractor?27 He saw SICs as collecting and disseminating data about community resources; providing tutorial assistance in basic English, consumer information, and job skills; and presenting cultural programs of importance to the farm worker group. How many SICs were developed as a result of his work is unknown, but it is clearly a concept complementary to the increasing number of information and referral services developed by public libraries, and to the growing awareness of the need for community analysis if a library is truly to serve its constituents.

Several recent rural programs, though not library-sponsored, would seem to have implications for possible library involvement. From Berea, Kentucky, the Appalachian Mobile Bookstore (another
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NEH project) travels the countryside stocked with over 250 books about Appalachia, from crafts and cookery to politics and strip-mining (many by local writers), records of traditional mountain music, and films from Appalshop about mountain culture. Public response has been enthusiastic, and local libraries and organizations have decided to organize their own Appalachian collections. Another program is that of the University for Man, a free university in Manhattan, Kansas, which provides technical assistance and training to small Kansas communities which are establishing free community education courses taught by local residents with such skills as creative writing, appropriate technology, and local history. In addition to the learning which takes place, the courses have proved valuable as a means of gathering rural residents to discuss common concerns and issues and act upon them.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, on a long-term basis, books-by-mail will cost less than bookmobiles; however much postage goes up it is unlikely to equal the rise in fuel costs, not to mention the other operational costs of maintaining a large vehicle and the need for vehicle replacement every ten years or so. Other costs for the two programs are or could be comparable. Book collection costs could equal out; both programs should utilize paperbacks to the highest degree possible to get the most for the dollar, with the least amount of space consumed per title (in mailing bags or on bookmobile shelves) and the broadest scope of subjects possible. Building space necessary for program operation is roughly comparable, as is administrative overhead and supervision. It is likely books-by-mail would also remain cheaper than maintaining a fixed building site, which involves costs for rent (or construction and land), heat, staff, etc. Buildings, however, offer certain advantages over bookmobile or books-by-mail programs: quiet study space for school children or adults who have returned to school or who are engaged in self-study pursuits; and meeting space for programs and community activities—a real bonus especially in rural areas where public space may be very scarce. Nonetheless, efficiency and effectiveness are not synonymous. While it is clearly mandatory, given escalating costs and increased demand for accountability to the public, to get rid of frills, duplication of effort, excessive paperwork and unused or overlapping services in all areas of libraries, to carry cost-effectiveness to its ultimate is to use no money and to provide no services at all. We must not neglect the needs of any citizen,
for that presumably is why libraries were established. Nor can we forget the needs of the rural disadvantaged, who are perhaps the least vocal of all minorities in this country. In some situations, books-by-mail may be able to fill the gap adequately; in other situations a combination of bookmobiles, books-by-mail, and judiciously selected community sites may be the most appropriate means of delivery.

In all situations, whatever the delivery style, the collection must be up to date and relevant to the daily needs and interests of the communities served. Service must be friendly and helpful, and capable of providing as many dimensions as feasible for the system and appropriate for the population served. Examples are information-and-referral files for agency services within the area and of local individuals with skills to share, the capability for handling ready reference queries, ties to a regional or system headquarters for interlibrary loan and answers to more complex reference questions, and programming to meet the special considerations of various age groups. Rural citizens need good library services no less than urban, and perhaps more; inferior service is sometimes worse than none at all, since it may suggest to those unfamiliar with libraries that a library is only a shelf of outdated books, with a fee for returning them late. The worsening economic situation of the country and the rapidly diminishing resources and mobility of the average citizen may actually be a boon to library use—rural and urban—and may increase public demand for adequate service. Bookstores note that mass-market unit sales of paperbacks are down 10-15 percent from last year, indicating customer resistance to increased prices and fewer trips to shopping malls; conversely, people may replace other, more expensive forms of entertainment with library books, and the delivery of books to them will become increasingly significant as they cut down on travel.

It seems appropriate to end this paper with the spirited response to the questionnaire from Louise Boone, director of the Albemarle Regional Library (Winton, North Carolina):

Thank the Lord—someone is finally waking up to the fact that there are vast areas of this great country of ours that are still rural to very rural, and a considerable population inhabits these so-called boondocks. They are entitled to library service just as much as urban and inner-city areas. Delivery is the key problem.

It is my feeling that rural delivery is on the edge of a crisis—the spiral in price of gasoline will cripple bookmobile operation and the spiral in postal costs for mail service. Our urban
colleagues have cost increases also, but these two costs are vital for effective rural service. The fact that some states that have had strong rural service programs are beginning to look the other way when it comes to funding rural service fills me with alarm.

References


9. Ibid., p. 106.


19. Further information about this project can be obtained from Dr. Richard Robertson at the Alabama State Library in Birmingham, (205) 277-7330.
20. For further information, contact Mari Herman, project director, at the Ohio State Library, (614) 466-2693.
21. For additional information, contact Elbert Watson, Executive Director of the Indiana Library Association, (317) 923-2197.
22. For further details, contact project director Jim Mylott, (304) 927-1130.
23. For further details, contact Ben Wakashige at the College of Education, (505) 277-1921.

Additional References

Delivery Systems and Programs


Reed, Mary J., and Schmidt, Susan K. Books by Mail: Moving the Library to Disadvantaged Adults (Public Library Training Institutes, Library Service Guide No. 6). Morehead, Ky., Appalachian Adult Education Center, Morehead State University, 1974. (ED 098 978)


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Appendix

LIBRARIES REPLYING TO SURVEY

Eastern Oklahoma District ............... BBM, P
Library System
801 West Okmulgee
Muskogee, Oklahoma 74401

Pioneer Multi-County Library .......... B, P
225 North Webster
Norman, Oklahoma 73069

Public Library System ............... B, BBM
604 East Avenue
Holdredge, Nebraska 68949

Fayette County Public Libraries .......... B, P
531 Summit Street
Oak Hill, West Virginia 25901

Monroe County Public Library .......... B, BBM, P
700 Fleming Street
Key West, Florida 33040

South Mississippi Regional Library .... BBM, P
900 Broad Street
Columbia, Mississippi 39429

Arrowhead Library System ............... B, BBM, P
701 Eleventh Street North
Virginia, Minnesota 55792

Northeast Colorado Regional Library .... B, BBM
325 West Seventh Street
Wray, Colorado 80758

Delaware County Public Libraries ....... BBM, P
P.O. Box 189
Earlville, Iowa 52041

Clinch-Powell Regional Library .......... B, BBM, P
Center
P.O. Box 269
Clinton, Tennessee 37716

Four County Library System ............... B, P
Club House Road
Binghamton, New York 13903
Delivery Systems and Programs

Choctaw Nation Multi-County Library System
Headquarters, 401 North Second Street
McAlester, Oklahoma 74501

Goshen County Public Library B, BBM, P
2001 East "A" Street
Torrington, Wyoming 82240

Public Library of Anniston & Calhoun County
108 East Tenth Street
Anniston, Alabama 36201

Western Plains Library System B, P
P.O. Box 1027
Clinton, Oklahoma 73601

Alaska State Library B, BBM, P
Pouch G
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Pender County Library B, P
P.O. Box 487
Burgaw, North Carolina 28425

Utah State Library B
2150 South 300 West, Suite 16
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

Kinderhook Regional Library B, BBM, P
104 East Commercial Street
Lebanon, Missouri 65536

New Mexico State Library B, BBM
P.O. Box 1629
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503

Fontana Regional Library B
P.O. Box 460
Bryson City, North Carolina 28713

Texas Panhandle Library System B
P.O. Box 2171
Amarillo, Texas 79189

Albemarle Regional Library BBM, P
Winton, North Carolina 27986

(B — Bookmobile; BBM — Books-by-Mail; P — Programming)
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Information Services and the Rural Library

BERNARD VAVREK

After some thirty years of neglect, American librarianship is discovering that not everyone lives in the city. So that there will be no confusion at the outset, "rural" today does not refer to thirty acres and a cow. In Pennsylvania, for example, "rural" is better typified by the coal stripper who flies his (or her) own helicopter to look after digging enterprises and lands in the parking lot of the Holiday Inn for lunch. In fact, only 4 percent of Pennsylvania's population is engaged in the production of food and fiber.¹

Therefore, the research that will subsequently be reported has been done for two purposes: to describe some of the conditions under which or because of which information service is provided in the small, rural public library; and to suggest some of the problems that are endemic to information service in these libraries. Beyond the scope of this paper, it is hoped that eventually enough data can be collected to provide insight into some of the basic problems facing reference librarians by using the (unspoiled) rural library as the paradigm.

Without intending to be evasive, this author is not really sure what rural librarianship is or, indeed, whether or not there is such a distinct category. But one must admit to having the same problem in attempting to define reference librarianship. The technological thrust of society has altered concepts and definitions. Rural is like all other words, i.e., it must be defined within a context. In some instances, one can find the word used interchangeably with "nonmetro." For counting purposes,

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the U.S. Bureau of the Census defines *rural* as a population base of less than 2500 outside urbanized areas. According to colleagues at the Cooperative Extension Services at Pennsylvania State University, however, researchers—including the federal government—can be found to be using figures as high as 100,000 to describe "rural."

The Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship has adopted the figure of 25,000 or less population as a definition of rurality. This population criterion is being utilized alone, i.e., without further qualifiers such as distance from a metropolitan area or population density. While the definition may change in the future, it is the criterion utilized in the research to be described here as the basis for selecting the libraries included in the sampling. The reader may wonder about the advisability of using such a large figure for defining a rural area. While it could prove unworkable, it will be easier to reduce the figure than to start with a smaller population base and have the task of doubling back to collect data relative to a larger population unit.

Additional background information is needed before discussing the research project. While Pennsylvania may now be best known for Three Mile Island, it is also, on a percentage basis (28.5) the state supporting the largest rural population in the United States—3,363,499 people of the total 1970 U.S. rural population of 11,793,909. In fact, with the exception of population centers such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Erie, Pennsylvania is largely rural. So, it is not a geographical or philosophical accident that the School of Library Science at Clarion State College organized the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship in early 1978. The objectives of the center are community service, continuing education, and research. In light of this last objective, concentrated effort has been made to begin surveying rural libraries in the first study to be aimed at determining the status of the information services they provide.

The information needs of Pennsylvanians living in rural areas are particularly acute. It is estimated by Patricia Broderick, Pennsylvania's acting state librarian, that 1,359,730 rural residents are "without" library service (see Table 1).

The first line of the table, the "unserved," represents those who must pay a nonresident fee for access to a public library. Of the fifty-four county libraries in Pennsylvania, six are newly established; these "fledgling" libraries serve more than 370,000. Line 3 indicates the number of citizens residing in the eight counties whose libraries do not meet the financial and service standards required for participation in the state aid program. Line 4 identifies the population served by non-state-aided
TABLE 1. RURAL RESIDENTS OF PENNSYLVANIA WITHOUT ADEQUATE LIBRARY SERVICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment of Population</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unserved by any public library</td>
<td>602,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served by fledgling county libraries</td>
<td>378,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served by substandard county libraries</td>
<td>285,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served by libraries with service populations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under 5,000</td>
<td>92,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,359,730</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


public libraries. These statistics are sufficient to suggest that more than a little incentive exists to study Pennsylvania rural libraries.

But even with the best of intentions, progress is well measured. After deciding upon a universe, it was necessary to develop a list of libraries serving that population configuration. Unfortunately, no such directory existed, so census data had to be matched with every library listed in the Pennsylvania Public Libraries Directory⁴ to determine which libraries fell within the under-25,000 population guideline. Logically excluded, for example, were the member libraries of the library systems of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Erie City and County Library, and the Free Library of Philadelphia. To give a further indication of the rurality of Pennsylvania, 480 of the state’s 650 libraries were categorized as rural using the center’s definition. Eventually, the center intends to survey all 480 rural libraries, but that project is being delayed until some institutional research funds can be located.

The remainder of this paper presents research findings gleaned from a questionnaire sent to eighty rural public libraries in Pennsylvania in October 1978. The sampling technique utilized was aimed at getting as broad a geographical distribution as possible. In addition, questionnaires were sent to the sixteen libraries comprising the Clarion District Library Association to augment the return.

The first item analyzed from the survey was population, i.e., the legal population of the town/city supporting a library in comparison with the population served. The result was that the average “legal” population of the thirty-five libraries included in the study was 4418; 247 was the smallest population base, and 10,857 was the population of the
largest town supporting a public library. In almost every instance, however, the actual population served by these libraries was more than twice the legal population; the average population served was approximately 10,500. However, twenty-two (63 percent) of the libraries involved in the study served populations under 10,000. While modest state support is provided based upon population served, the difficulty is to motivate the townships outside the population base actually supporting the library and its services to contribute financially. This condition of who pays and who does not may not be unique to rural areas. What exacerbates the condition in the rural area, however, is the extremely small population base and subsequent tax base that is held captive to provide for financial support.

Some insight into rural library financial support may be offered by the example of Summerville (population 859), which has a per capita expenditure of $1.08. Fortunately, this example was unusual among the libraries participating in the study; the actual per capita average was $3.15. However, eighteen libraries (51 percent) had per capita support under $3.00. One library was supported on a per capita basis of $7.80 owing to the involvement of a local foundation which provided capital for the development of the library and its continuing support. The $3.15 average compared interestingly with the per capita support in Pittsburgh ($6.75) and in Philadelphia ($7.38). The average operating per capita support for public libraries in Pennsylvania was $4.37. Fortunately, Pennsylvania’s attitude is not typical among other states. Somewhat more encouraging was the financial support for public libraries in, for example, Illinois, which has a per capita expenditure of $7.63; Iowa, with $6.12 per capita; and Ohio, Pennsylvania’s neighbor, which supported public libraries with $7.04 per capita. (Ohio’s unique form of support is based on a tax levied on the sale of stocks and bonds.)

As one might guess from the modest financial support of the rural libraries included in this study, there was a domino effect. While the responding libraries were open for service an average of 39.5 hours per week, there were only 9.3 professional librarians to provide service among the 35 libraries. Also, Pennsylvania’s Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Pennsylvania Local Libraries Receiving State Aid provides for two other categories of staffing, i.e., the Provisional Librarian and the Library Assistant. The Provisional Librarian is one who has completed four years of undergraduate education and has taken at least twelve hours of library science courses. The Library Assistant must complete two years of college and nine hours of library science. The 35 libraries studied indicated sharing 11.1 Provisional Librarians and 10.1
Library Assistants, in addition to the 9.3 professional staff members. Therefore, there was an average of 0.87 persons from the three staffing categories per library. This percentage was based on a 35-hour minimum workweek. It is fairly obvious from the above discussion that there was a dearth of "professional" staff available in the rural libraries surveyed. Were it not for the average 3.0 volunteers and 2.1 other staff (clerks, clerical assistants, etc.) per library, it is doubtful whether most of the libraries surveyed would be operational.

Charles Bunge's research in 1967 pointed out that the reference efficiency of even the professionally trained librarian is challenged in the smaller library: "In the smaller collections greater use had to be made of more general sources, demanding more skill in selecting appropriate general tools, perhaps based on more thorough knowledge of their contents, and greater ability to get at the information in them through indexes, etc."7 The irony is that rural libraries have both untrained staff and a sparsity of resources on which to draw.

This inadequacy in library staffing and library education training is a most compelling matter. In fact, while it is a function of overall financial neglect, its dimensions are not entirely economic. At this writing, the author is preparing for three successive days of reference workshops which will be conducted for about seventy-five rural public libraries in the Northcentral Library District of Pennsylvania. This workshops/conferences approach is the heart of rural library education presently, and of course is not just a Pennsylvania phenomenon. It is likewise true in New Mexico, Colorado, Illinois, and Iowa, to name just a few states. At present, the target of this rural library education is the library practitioner, the non-MLS librarian (it is degrading to categorize these individuals as "nonprofessionals").

The absence of professionally trained librarians in Pennsylvania is a great problem, but the situation is even worse elsewhere. John Houlanhan of the Northwest Regional Library System in Sioux City, Iowa, has indicated that only 4 of the 108 head librarians in that system have formal (MLS) library training. It is true that the dilemma is largely an economic one. In most cases rural public librarians are so poorly paid that relatively few individuals are motivated to earn a library degree.

While state libraries, library consultants, district coordinators, and schools of library science have attempted to cope with the crisis in training rural librarians, more exciting techniques and ideas must be utilized. State library associations and ALA must first acknowledge the realities of library service in the small library, and then deal practically with the issue of library education.
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Before additional questions are raised which will be of particular interest to students of reference service, some other factors affecting the libraries surveyed should be mentioned. For example, the libraries had an average book collection of 19,405 items. While this aggregate says nothing about the actual titles collected or in any way identifies "reference" items, it does suggest that the libraries surveyed are for the most part meeting the Pennsylvania standard of 1.5 appropriate book titles per capita. Here it is useful to refer to Bunge's finding that the median holdings of the public libraries he studied numbered 93,313 items. For purposes of this paper, then, the dynamics of a collection approximately one-fifth this size will be considered.

Some insight into resource availability was provided by an examination of interlibrary loans among the libraries surveyed. While the survey showed that the responding libraries each loan approximately 32 books on an annual basis, the average number of borrowed items was 282, or approximately 9 times the number lent. Even the timid researcher would be tempted to interpret these data as a possible indication of collection inadequacy. The number of interlibrary loans was particularly marked when compared with the state's overall statistics; these data showed only an 18 percent difference between items loaned and items borrowed among public libraries.

The survey included a question relating to general collection characteristics, i.e., whether or not the responding library maintained special subject collections for which special funds were allocated. It is not surprising from what has already been said that only twelve libraries (34.3 percent) indicated having some form of special subject collection. While there was little consistency in the way in which the libraries responded, eight indicated having collections in local history, three identified genealogy collections, and two mentioned Pennsylvania history. Because of the latitude with which "special collections" can be interpreted, any future research regarding this collections aspect will have to be gathered through personal interview rather than a mailed survey.

With the previous discussion serving as an indication of some of the environmental aspects of the rural libraries included in the study, matters more immediately pertinent to the libraries' information services will now be considered. The first question that might be of some interest dealt with whether the participating librarians kept a record of reference questions. Not surprisingly, 60 percent answered "no," 37 percent indicated that they did record reference questions, and one librarian did not respond. This should not be surprising, of course,
since most public library research including the enumeration of refer-
ence questions as an element of the surveying concluded that there was
no real propensity among the librarians to tabulate such data. It is this
author’s impression that librarians in general are presently disinclined
toward the importance of tabulating reference questions. This disinter-
est is created by the seeming unrelatedness of record-keeping to any-
thing of practical value. However, because of new techniques of
reference evaluation, the record of questions asked (and answered)
shows more than just abstract data. Accountability is a real thing; and
there are those who see little that is real with the library’s information
services.

The following data will suggest the modest number of inquiries
fielded in the rural library as a function of providing reference service.
But the reader must recall as a point of perspective that there were only
0.87 “professional” staff available per library to provide assistance.
Although the categories of reference questions used in the survey instru-
ment are not in complete accord with those used in the LIBGIS scheme,9
they are nevertheless fairly typical of the levels used to distinguish
questions by researchers.10

Librarians were first asked to enumerate (or estimate) the number
of “directional” questions—an example given was “Where is Time
magazine?”—which they encountered on a weekly basis, either through
personal contact or by telephone. (LIBGIS would categorize these ques-
tions as “directional transactions.”) Table 2 illustrates the results. One
will note that the intervals on Table 2 and the following tables were
increased at the upper end to simplify counting. One should also note
that there is some skepticism about the number of libraries indicating,
for example, that they were asked 500 or more directional questions a
week. An average was made of the raw data for thirty-one of the thirty-
five libraries (four libraries did not respond); the result was that 3057
questions were answered through personal contact on a weekly basis, or
98.6 questions per library. Assuming an average workweek of 39.5
hours, approximately 2.5 questions were answered every hour in each
library.

Telephone inquiries were fewer. By averaging the raw data, survey-
ors found that 36.7 telephone inquiries were handled per week among
the libraries surveyed, an average of 0.9 questions per hour. Therefore,
the number of directional inquiries asked in person or by telephone
during an average work hour was 3.4 per library.

This author would like to make an aside to comment on this
question in the survey. While it does fit the LIBGIS scheme for compari-
TABLE 2. NUMBER OF DIRECTIONAL QUESTIONS HANDLED PER WEEK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Number of Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125-129</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195-199</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250-254</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-304</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>475-479</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-504</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-604</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number, what is frequently misunderstood about this type of question is that rather than leading to a yes/no (i.e., single step) answer, it usually signals the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Some researchers tend to demean the importance of the directional question because of a failure to realize that it represents an effort by the patron to utilize library services. Since it does represent the first statement of communication, its complexity may seem limited although really it is a way for the patron to probe the system. Furthermore, a misinterpretation of the role of the directional question is causing reference librarians to be assigned to other duties while nonprofessional staff are filling those spots.

Table 3 represents data on so-called ready reference questions. An example used in the survey was “What is the population of Chicago?” This type of question would compare with the LIBGIS “reference transaction.” An average of the thirty-one libraries responding to the in-library inquiry resulted in a yield of 56.3 questions per library per week. Computed against the number of hours the library was open, this figure resulted in 1.4 inquiries per hour. When the raw data were averaged among the thirty-one libraries responding to the question on telephone inquiries, the result was 23.9 questions per library per week.
The total of in-library and by-telephone ready reference questions was approximately two per hour.

**TABLE 3. NUMBER OF READY REFERENCE QUESTIONS HANDLED PER WEEK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Number of Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-154</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220-224</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350-354</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375-379</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-504</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 summarizes data provided by the libraries about the number of “research” inquiries answered on a weekly basis. A sample given on the survey form to illustrate this type of question was “Develop a bibliography on tax reform.” Parenthetically, LIBGIS would classify this also as a “reference transaction.” An average of the raw data of the thirty-one libraries responding indicated that 18.7 questions were answered in each library weekly, or 0.47 questions per hour. When the telephone inquiries were averaged, the result was 1.9 questions per library, or 0.04 per working hour. This analysis resulted in an average of approximately 0.5 research questions per library per hour.

By adding the results of Tables 2-4, one discovers that approximately six questions (directional, ready reference, or research) are asked on an hourly basis either in person or by telephone in the rural libraries surveyed. On a monthly basis, therefore, approximately 950 inquiries are made. While the reader might cry “foul,” this figure should be contrasted with the 10,000 inquiries asked through the TIP Service at the
TABLE 4. NUMBER OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS HANDLED PER WEEK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Number of Libraries In Library</th>
<th>Number of Libraries By Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-124</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199-204</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detroit Public Library on a monthly basis. Indeed, the comparison isn't fair. But the rationale for introducing it is to suggest the considerable differences that exist among the models of public libraries.

To continue an enumeration of reference activities in the libraries surveyed, another aspect of the LIBGIS scheme was used which suggested a relatively new but important approach to enumerating reference service. This aspect concerned the amount of instructions given per month. This concept adds an important dimension to the way in which reference service is perceived and counted by tabulating instances and particularly the degree to which librarians have instructed patrons.

Table 5 illustrates the data collected from the libraries responding to a question regarding "person-to-person" and "group instruction" activities. For the 33 libraries responding to this question, an average of the raw data indicated that 1877 personal efforts at instruction were collectively achieved on a monthly basis, or 56.8 per library. Dividing this figure by 158 (the number of hours in the work month), the average per library was 0.35 instructions per hour.

Attempting to obtain information about group contacts was a problem. Probably because of the way the question was posed in the survey, only seventeen of the libraries responded with an enumeration of the total number of instructional efforts made through group contacts. While these data are recorded in Table 5, they resulted in an hourly average of only 0.06 group instructional contacts per library. Seventeen other libraries responded to this question in a diverse manner, indicating, for example, that "annually, the first grades are instructed, as are the Brownies, the Boy Scouts, etc." Regardless of the confusion on this question, it is apparent that the libraries surveyed are only modestly
TABLE 5. INSTANCES OF INSTRUCTION PER MONTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Patrons</th>
<th>Number of Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>25-29</td>
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<td>40-44</td>
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<td>60-64</td>
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<td>120-124</td>
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<td>250-254</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-304</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

involved in library instruction. Computing the number of reference inquiries on an hourly basis was in many ways unfair, or perhaps implied that there was a quota that must be maintained. This approach was taken only for the purpose of exposition.

Analysis of data from Tables 2-5 indicated that the average number of reference questions answered—directional, ready reference, research, or instruction—amounted to about 6.5 per hour in the rural libraries surveyed. While this was a modest number, one must be reminded of the staffing pattern discussed earlier, i.e., the dearth of professional staff available to provide library service. Also, one should remember that the 6.5 questions per hour constitute only one aspect of library service expected of the librarian available. The small rural library, furthermore, does not allow the luxury of departmentalization or staff specialization. Elsewhere this author has discussed the importance and need for every librarian, regardless of assigned or assumed specialization, to act as an information helper. While this work ethic should be interpreted individually, in the small library there is little escaping this all-purpose role.

The remainder of this paper deals with the final three questions asked in the survey which attempted to elicit data about the subjective nature of informational inquiries.

The data shown in Table 6 look similar in format to one of the
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"classic" methods of question analysis, i.e., by subject area. In the survey the librarians were asked to indicate those questions most frequently encountered and to list them by subject area in descending order of frequency. The data indicate that 22.8 percent of the librarians identified "school assignments" as the category of questions most frequently asked. Seventeen percent responded with "history," and 11 percent indicated "genealogy" and "how to" questions as most frequently asked.

TABLE 6. RANKING OF QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED, BY SUBJECT AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Frequency Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School assignments</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genealogy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;How to&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies, government</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography, travel</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical information</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current information (TV, movies, news)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling, meaning, words</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals, plants, agriculture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographical information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts, arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term papers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers/texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports, recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready reference</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Admittedly, maintaining some consistency in categorization was a prime problem and one not unique to this study. Nevertheless, one will note across the categories the prominence of "how to," "social studies," "school assignments," and "genealogy" questions as those most frequently asked.

Next, the survey data on the most frequently asked questions were extended by asking respondents to identify the types of questions which they could not answer and to list these in descending order of frequency. These data, represented in Table 7, do not offer any new insights; rather, they reaffirm the problems repeatedly encountered with technical, legal, and medical questions. Interestingly, however, 16 percent of the libraries responded that "business" and "technical" were the most troublesome categories of questions, although "genealogy" and "addresses" were also identified as difficult questions.

TABLE 7. RANKING OF UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED, BY SUBJECT AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Frequency Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current information (TV, radio, news)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School assignments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, financial</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genealogy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses, phone numbers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local history, history</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature, drama</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiques</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;How to&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional problems</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical (census)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government, political</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, physics, agriculture, mathematics, engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographical information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BERNARD VAVREK

To understand further some of the issues limiting reference performance (in the sense of unanswered questions), the librarians surveyed were asked to rank the categories listed in Table 8 in descending order of importance. It is relatively clear from the data in Table 8 that the technical nature of the questions and the lack of specialized information resources are causal to the unanswerable question. There can be no doubt of the limiting factor caused by a dearth of needed reference material. This fact can also certainly be inferred from the data shown in the table. It is important to mention Ronald Powell’s research on public library reference performance here. His finding (consistent with Bunge’s research) that a strong predictor of reference service is collection size reiterates the desperate need for the small rural library to augment its informational resources.14

TABLE 8. RANKING OF REASONS FOR UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question overly technical</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Do not answer” type</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of reference material</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of specialized staff</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The purpose of this research was to begin to highlight the environment in which reference service is provided in the rural public library. Admittedly, the survey reviewed was introductory, and perhaps generated additional questions as well as some answers. However, some factors emerge to help explain the uniqueness of information service provision in the rural library:

1. Library service in general, and reference service in particular, must necessarily be limited when per capita expenditure is only slightly in excess of $3.00. Obviously, not much more than a holding action can be assumed until this niggardly amount of financial support is improved.

2. The dimensions of service are restricted because of the unavailability
of professional staff; approximately nine professional (MLS) librarians were available for the thirty-five libraries surveyed. Were it not for volunteers, most of these libraries would either be closed or be operational for only a limited number of hours.

3. The libraries surveyed rely significantly on interlibrary loan for extending collections. Nine times as many items were borrowed as were loaned by these libraries, suggesting obvious collection limitations. While the survey did not inquire specifically about the number of reference questions actually answered through interlibrary loan, it is fair to express the frustration inherent in the constant need to borrow library materials to fill requests for information because existing resources are not sufficiently specialized.

4. An average of six reference questions (directional, ready reference, or research) per hour were asked per library. In addition, approximately 0.5 instructional contacts were made per hour per library. This aspect of information service is particularly distressing in that apparently little effort is aimed at instructing or communicating with the patron about the use of the library. In fact, instruction seems to have little importance. This, of course, is coincidental with and one aspect of the library’s overall public relations efforts. In a recent study conducted by Mary Miske of the Johnstown (Pennsylvania) Public Library, it was discovered that while 90 percent of the individuals surveyed had some concept of the role of the reference librarian, 72 percent did not know what specific reference services were available in the library.15 Much greater effort must be made to involve the public in the library’s services through public relations activities, which include in-library instruction.

5. Sixty percent of libraries surveyed kept no record of reference questions asked. While such record-keeping is no doubt a nuisance, there is much to be learned from studying information about questions asked and answered for collection development and utilization purposes.

6. Librarians in the survey indicated that school assignments, history, genealogy, and “how to” questions were the most frequently asked, and that questions which could not be answered fell into the “business” and “technical” areas. Respondents cited the “technical” nature of the questions being asked and a lack of specialized information resources as major reasons for inability to answer questions.

For some time it has concerned this author that libraries have been conveniently grouped together for purposes of comparison without
much concern for individual differences. The research reported in this study is based on the premise that there is an element of library service, i.e., the rural library, that has escaped the consciousness of American librarianship at both conceptual and practical levels. Further, it is the author's view that the basic model of library service as exemplified by the rural library affords an opportunity to investigate information services which will be of benefit to all students of reference service. It is hoped that this paper is a modest step in that direction.

References

8. Ibid., p. 7.
11. This figure was provided by Norman Maas, chief of the TIP Service, in a speech at the Summer Library Institute, McKendree College, Lebanon, Ill., June 14, 1979.
Technical Services and Centralized Processing for the Rural Public Library: An Overview

JAMES W. FRY

A U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION study in 1956 revealed that 26 million rural residents were without any public library service and that more than 300 rural counties had no public library within their borders. On June 19, 1956, efforts to correct this dire situation occurred when President Eisenhower signed the Library Services Bill. Eisenhower stated: "The Library Services Bill...represents an effort to stimulate the States and local communities to increase library services available to rural Americans."2

The Library Services Act (LSA), forerunner of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), had a tremendous impact on the improvement of library services for rural America. LSA defined a rural area as any place with a population of 10,000 or less.3 In addition to expanded services and funds for books, LSA provided the impetus and funds for state-sponsored centralized processing centers. In a 1970 Library Resources & Technical Services article, F. William Summers noted that "prior to 1956 centralized processing activities were few: notably Georgia, Missouri, and New York."4 Summers listed the following reasons for the establishment of a centralized processing center:

1. Concentration of expensive cataloging tools.
2. Concentration of able catalogers.
3. Shortened lines of communication with corresponding efficiency and administration.
4. Greater use of standardized rules and procedures.

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5. Elimination of extra revising and editing.
6. Greater ease in maintaining cataloging policy.5

Centralized processing enables libraries to utilize their resources to greater advantage by having costly, time-consuming and redundant processing routines accomplished in a central location at a lower cost. A 1971 report in the Indiana Library Studies series noted that: "Many librarians have no real concept of their own internal cataloging costs and no real feel for cost analysis. Consequently, commercial or processing center charges may seem high to them, when they are, in fact, quite reasonable and cheaper than the library's present costs."6 During 1977 and 1978, this author conducted technical service cost studies among numerous small public libraries in both Ohio and Pennsylvania. The results revealed that the average in-house cataloging and processing cost ranged from five to seven dollars per unit. The cost analyses were based on: (1) personnel—number of staff, salaries, and fringe benefits; and (2) supplies—those items used in a technical service operation (i.e., catalog cards, book jackets, pockets, etc.), and commercial processing kits and services. Costs of building space, maintenance, and equipment depreciation were not included.

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the literature concerning centralized processing was abundant. In the 1970s the literature was less evident as state library agencies began to concentrate their efforts and resources on the development of multicounty cooperatives, improved reference and interlibrary loan services, book grants, and more recently, network development.7 A recent computer base search of the literature regarding cooperative technical services in the rural library provided 125 abstracted citations. The search terms included: cataloging—library—cooperation; acquisition—library—cooperation; technical processes—cooperative; technical processes—centralization; shared services—centralization; and public libraries—cataloging. Fewer than ten citations were even remotely applicable to the subject of this paper. While the literature has decreased, cooperative centralized processing centers continue to flourish.

In 1978 the Technical Services Directors of Processing Centers Discussion Group of ALA published the Cooperative Regional Centralized Processing Centers Directory. The group defined a cooperative regional centralized processing center as one which serves two or more governmental separate library units, including school, academic, state agency, special, and public libraries, or a combination of these. The directory lists sixty-nine centers in thirty states (see Table 1). State
processing centers are those which operate as a department of the state library or as an affiliated agency (see Table 2). The centers range in volumes processed from 10,000 to 300,000. Of the sixty-nine centers listed, six indicated that they utilized OCLC in their processing programs. Per item cost was not noted in this paper since there is such a wide variance, ranging from under one dollar to over four dollars. In order to obtain a valid comparison, the same factors—salary (including fringe benefits), supplies, and overhead cost—would need to be accessed from each center.

**TABLE 1. NUMBER OF PROCESSING CENTERS BY STATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State Library Agency</th>
<th>Other (Public, Academic, School)</th>
<th>Total Centers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>Mississippi</td>
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<td>Missouri</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Oregon</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>South Dakota</td>
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<td>Tennessee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>

TABLE 2. STATE LIBRARY AGENCY PROCESSING CENTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Date Established</th>
<th>Volumes Processed FY 1977</th>
<th>Total Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>45,181</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>318,177</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>173,944</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>54,459</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>150,881</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>76,608</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>17,921</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Cooperative Processing Services

Based on information supplied in the Cooperative Regional Centralized Processing Centers Directory, over 80 percent of the participants are small public libraries. Most of these small or rural libraries process between 500 and 1000 volumes per year. Approximately one-half the centers provide cooperative acquisition services. Some would argue that no substantial savings would result from cooperative acquisition since jobber discounts are nearly as high on an individual library basis. Furthermore, the cost of maintaining this service would reduce the overall cooperative acquisition discount.

The State Library of Ohio processing center requires that each participant sign a contract or agreement which sets forth the responsibilities of both the participant and the center. The processing center agrees to receive, catalog, classify, process, and ship materials according to the participant's profiling specifications. The profiling specifications include: classification (Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress), location of the ownership stamps, plastic jacket, accession number, and any special location stamp, such as "reference" or "juvenile." The agreement also specifies the per item processing fee. The participant agrees to make payment within thirty days of the receipt of a statement for services rendered by the center. The center or the participant may terminate the agreement at any time without the other's consent, providing that at least thirty days' written notice is given.

While the number of nonbook materials (films, microforms, tapes, phonorecords) has increased, the overwhelming majority of items pro-
Technical Services and Centralized Processing

processed continues to be hardcover and paperback materials. The processing of the low volume of nonbook items, for the most part, remains an in-house activity. A full-service processing center provides catalog cards and physical processing— stamping of the book, spine labeling, book pockets and cards, and plastic jackets. The materials arrive at the participating library ready for shelving.

Turnaround time for materials received from the jobber (or direct from the participant) to shipment of processed materials varies from center to center. Under normal conditions, 80-90 percent of the materials are shipped in five to fifteen working days. Original cataloged items may take thirty to sixty working days.

The Illinois State Library, with the assistance of the Library Research Center of the Graduate School of Library Science at the University of Illinois, is evaluating the Illinois Library Materials Processing Center at Rockford. In conjunction with this evaluation, the Library Research Center is conducting a survey of cooperative regional centralized processing centers throughout the country. This survey will update the 1978 Cooperative Regional Centralized Processing Centers Directory by providing specific information regarding such areas as turnaround time, costs, and automation.

Several of the cooperative cataloging and processing centers are currently utilizing the OCLC system. Since 1974 the State Library of Ohio has been a participant in OCLC. The Ohio Valley Area Libraries (OVAL) and the Southwestern Ohio Rural Libraries (SWORL) are multicounty cooperatives which actively participate in the state library's cataloging and processing program. In the future, through OCLC's local holdings record file, participants will be able to access their library holdings on-line through dial-up access terminals. This will provide interlibrary loan information as well as a basis for off-line services. The Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority (INCOLSA) operates a statewide cataloging and processing center and is also a participant in the OCLC system. INCOLSA provides computer printouts of the participants' records, based on the OCLC computer tapes.

Technical Services at the Local Level

A 1971 report on cooperative centralized processing for Indiana libraries concluded that: "(1) smaller libraries cannot afford and are not able to carry out successfully and economically all of the varied aspects of technical services at the local level. (2)...acceptance and adoption of
centrally produced cataloging copy meeting national standards is not only economic, but results in better service to library users than cataloging done on a purely local basis for almost all libraries."\(^{10}\) The report also noted that there was considerable resistance among smaller libraries to creating or joining federated, consolidated, or independent technical processing centers, based upon real, though unjustified, feelings that these centers may restrict selection, be too expensive, or produce cataloging and processing which is not suited to their users.\(^{11}\) The authors of the Indiana report concluded that "while the centralized processing facilities which we have examined in detail undoubtedly could be improved, they are usually both more efficient and qualitatively better than the local library processing which they have replaced."\(^{12}\) These observations and conclusions regarding technical services at the local level remain applicable to present procedures and attitudes. The author of this report has observed that some rural librarians in Ohio not utilizing a cooperative processing program spend 20 percent or more of their time involved with technical service activities.

Those rural libraries which do not participate in a cooperative centralized materials processing program utilize various options to fill their technical services needs. They either catalog and process their materials completely in-house or obtain their materials already processed from a commercial processing firm. Some utilize both options, cataloging in-house those materials that the commercial firm could not supply. For those libraries processing in-house, Cataloging in Publication (CIP) information has been extremely helpful. Many librarians fail to realize that in-house processing is the most expensive option. Many of the small libraries are also unaware of the recommended standards for in-house processing. In addition to the American Library Association's *Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966*, standards have been defined for the small public library in *Interim Standards for Small Public Libraries*.\(^{13}\) These standards were prepared by the ALA Subcommittee on Standards for Small Public Libraries in 1962. Those *Interim Standards* relating to technical services include fourteen guidelines under the heading "Books and Nonbook Materials," and thirteen guidelines under "Organization and Control of Materials."

Commercial processing firms provide an alternative for the rural library. This service provides a degree of standardization for the libraries' technical service programs. The Commercial Processing Services Committee of ALA's Resources and Technical Services Division offers a checklist for those libraries considering a commercial processing service. The checklist appeared in the Spring 1979 issue of *Library Resources & Technical Services*. 
Future Considerations

As most researchers of rural public library programs soon discover, there is a limited amount of information in the literature regarding rural public libraries. This is especially evident in specific aspects such as technical service activities. This lack of information points out the real need for research on current rural public library service programs. However, there is evidence that efficiently operated, service-oriented, cooperative processing centers have been extremely effective in filling the technical service needs of many rural public libraries.

Most librarians would agree that we are living in the most exciting era in the history of American librarianship. This excitement has been created by the application of computer technology to library functions. The technical service function, namely cataloging, has been revolutionized by the introduction of OCLC nearly a decade ago. Today, the Washington Library Network (WLN) and the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) are also contributing to this revolution. This technological revolution has had and will continue to have a tremendous impact on all aspects of library service and on all types and sizes of libraries.

Cooperation between all types and sizes of libraries will continue to develop and grow throughout the next decade. California's Proposition 13 points up the need for greater utilization and sharing of resources. Accountability and efficiency are watchwords, as both inflation and taxpayer revolt have their impact on all types and sizes of libraries. John Kenneth Galbraith argues that: “The public servant has to be better than the private employee. That is because he or she is so much more visible. Therefore all public management must involve a relentless search for better performance.”14 It is hoped that computer applications to library operations will assist in this goal. The rural public library, if it is to be effective in the community, cannot be denied the opportunity of participating in and benefiting from the fruits of this powerful, dynamic phenomenon of the twentieth century.

As we move forward in the next decade, the rural public library and its clientele cannot be overlooked or ignored. In 1956 the Library Services Act was specifically aimed at improved library services for the rural public library. This “temporary” act, forerunner of the Library Services and Construction Act, was designed to assist the rural library by providing funding to improve inadequate library service programs to rural United States. If LSCA is replaced by a National Library Act, as proposed by Senators Kennedy and Javits, the rural public library must be included as a beneficiary of this act.
Cooperative processing programs that have not or are not planning to implement a computer-based system may face a difficult future. In order to survive and be effective, they will need to implement and utilize fully the advances of the technological revolution. The rural public library and its users cannot be relegated to second-class citizenship in the quest for access to information. In the coming decade, the rural public library must fulfill its role as an active participant in the national network.

References

5. Ibid. See also Mullen, Evelyn D. "Guidelines for Establishing a Centralized Library Processing Center." Library Resources & Technical Services 2:172, Summer 1958.
10. Roth, op. cit., p. 23.
12. Ibid.

Additional References


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Technical Services and Centralized Processing


The Rural Public Library Trustee: A Preliminary Assessment

CLIFFORD E. LANGE

There are many questions one can ask about rural public library trustees. One question that came to mind, and the one which influenced the content and direction of this article, is the following: is it necessary to differentiate rural public library trustees and urban public library trustees? Attempts to answer this question led to the conclusion that such differentiation is not useful in relation to the duties and responsibilities of trustees. What appears to be more productive is to examine the library environment in which the rural public library trustee functions.

That library environment, in contrast to the urban library, can be said to include at least five relatively unique operational elements: (1) remoteness from the mainstream of current library activity, (2) generally poor financial support, (3) lack of professional staff, (4) lack of adequate resources, and (5) generally poor status in the community served (an element shared with public libraries of all sizes).

Allie Beth Martin's overall assessment of the public library is far from encouraging, particularly in relation to the rural, small public library: "The fate of the American institutional phenomenon, the public library, is in question. Its position has never been truly secure in terms of general use or public support except in the large cities until recent years, and for a few short periods of marked progress countrywide."2

For purposes of this article, a rural public library is considered to be a library in any place of 10,000 population or less, the definition used in

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the Library Services Act to specify libraries eligible for funding. The Library Services Act itself was an attempt to deal with a long-recognized problem, the difficulty of adequately funding the small public library, which by definition was and is the rural public library.

Louis Round Wilson pointed out in 1938 that “of the 45,130,098 people in the United States who are without public library service, 39,673,217, or approximately 88 percent, live in the open country, or in towns of less than 2500 population.” He went on to say that “here, then, is America’s greatest library problem, the problem of providing effective public library service for the one-third of the total population who live on farms and in the small towns and villages of rural American.” As of this writing (in 1979), 65 percent of U.S. public libraries are in cities with populations under 10,000.

In 1944 Carleton Joeckel wrote a critical essay on the problems of library extension in relation to the optimum size of the library unit. In a series of what he called “rough strokes,” Joeckel criticized the by-products of the small unit system, implying that this led to “too many library board members doing too many wrong things about the running of their little libraries.” He continued: “Any broad view of the geography of library organization in America makes it clear that the American system has failed, in a large proportion of cases, to unite urban and rural areas into effective library units. For historical or governmental reasons, many cities have been content to go their own way quite separate from the surrounding rural areas.”

Joeckel’s recommended solution to this problem of inequality was to work toward a sound framework of larger units of service. He said the ultimate success of library service depends upon the strength of the basic library units, and predicted that “the fears caused by any yielding of cherished local independence will quickly disappear when the more efficient service of the larger unit replaces the limited service of the very small library.” Even today, this confident prediction would probably receive mixed reviews.

The library profession’s formally adopted solution to the problems outlined by Joeckel rests upon the idea of formal cooperation. The 1956 ALA standards, for example, urged libraries to “band together formally or informally, in groups called ‘systems.’” The document further stated that: “The development of systems of libraries does not weaken or eliminate the small community library. On the contrary, it offers that library and its users greatly expanded resources and services”—a paraphrase of Joeckel.

Although much progress has been made in the move toward sys-
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tems, the small, independent rural public library is still with us. The problems of the small rural public library remain much the same today as they were twenty-five or fifty years ago: isolation, insufficient support, lack of a professional librarian as director, and lack of resources adequate to meet the needs of its users. These problems and their relatively intensive level present the rural library trustee with a challenge of greater magnitude than that typically faced by the urban library trustee, who often has access to expertise and resources totally beyond the reach of the rural trustee.

Library literature is well supplied with descriptive and prescriptive articles on trustees, most of which create a paragon whose list of traits are fully attainable by few, if any. Perhaps one of the greatest problems in writing about the library trustee is the lack of substantive, research-based articles on the trustee and his or her role. Although they are the subject of a sizable body of literature, library boards have been the object of little research. Much of the literature deplores how little research there has been and urges concentrated attention to library boards and governing authorities as subjects of research.

Before dealing specifically with the rural trustee, it seems appropriate to discuss briefly issues relating to library boards in general. The role and status of library boards have been the subjects of periodic controversy. The literature of librarianship offers a multitude of justifications to support and defend the board form of library government. Although this view predominates in library literature, there are both librarians and trustees who view the library board as a necessary evil.

The literature on library boards can be said to reveal two dominant, recurrent concerns: (1) Are library boards necessary? (2) What is the relationship between the library director and his or her library board in the areas of policy-making and administration?

The essence of the positive prescriptive literature is exemplified by Hall, Winser, McAllister and Warncke, and Young, all of whom stress that the librarian alone cannot carry the whole load of administration and policy-making.

The library board aids the librarian in his or her many duties by acting as a buffer between the librarian and city hall, as an interpreter of the library to the community, as a handy source of expertise in various fields, and as a source of ready reference to community wants and needs. Typical of the strong belief in these vital support roles of the library board is Hall's defense of the administrative board in light of the failure of many boards to carry out successfully the duties assigned to them: "Library boards themselves...have it within their power to erase the
arguments against their administration, for their chief weaknesses have arisen from misunderstanding or neglect of functions rather than from any inadequacy in the functions themselves.\textsuperscript{15}

A perusal of the trustee handbooks of various states, along with the type of material cited above, gives credence to Garceau's conclusion that "the library profession has developed an orthodox and generally-agreed-upon body of thought about the library board."\textsuperscript{16} However, this orthodoxy has been challenged by many, although few can offer evidence to back up their assertions. Supported by the research of the Public Library Inquiry, Garceau concluded that:

Perhaps the long-run development of public libraries should point toward libraries as operating departments. There is evidently nothing inherently incompatible with good library service in this unelaborated structure. No sudden break with the established form, however, is conceivable. Librarians have not yet by any means become universally trained as technical experts or as a learned profession, and where they have been so trained, their standing as experts is not always fully recognized.\textsuperscript{17}

In contrast to Garceau's conclusion is that of Joeckel, whose landmark research study of public library government led him to assert that although its tradition may be greater than its performance, the library board has earned the right to survive, and that, indeed, a library is likely to succeed best with a lay board and a professional executive.\textsuperscript{18}

Political scientists have been most persistent critics of the administrative board form of library government. Redford, for example, delineated the issues, saying that although the board form has been common in state and local administration:

I wish we had more scholarly analysis of this device. It certainly has brought to administration the interest and ideas of outstanding community leaders, and conversely has had an educative effect upon these participants.

At the same time, lay responsibility for top management and policy direction has its disadvantages. It strengthens functional independence and impedes coordination, and the argument against it is strong where continuing coordination with other functions is needed. It has been a device for keeping politics out of administration. Has it done so? Or, has it channelled politics into hidden and irresponsible channels? ...Has it removed too much from politics? Has it kept ques-
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tions out of the political channel which should have been considered here? Has it prevented discussion and education of the public on significant issues?...

How do lay boards obtain the information on which they operate? Must it not come to them from the bureaucracy they are to control? Without a study and planning staff of its own and without time for full time analysis of the problems, can a lay board provide the degree of democratic control over the bureaucracy that is needed?...Moreover, where there is a strong professional group interest in the work of an agency, is there not danger that the lay board will overrepresent such an interest and not provide a really independent control on behalf of the society as a whole?19

The questions Redford raised do not appear to have definitive answers, due primarily, it seems, to lack of empirical research upon which to base judgments. Although Donald W. Koepp's study dealt with much larger cities than are relevant to this discussion, his thoughts concerning public library government are relevant to the issue of the library board and the lack of research data to support its role and validity. In an author's note to his study, Koepp expressed these thoughts:

The reader will be inclined to ask to what extent I feel that these findings represent what goes on generally in the governing of the several thousand other municipal public libraries in the United States. I would have to answer that I do not know, and I would be quick to insist that no one else knows either. I would also respond that our lack of knowledge is at the very root of our problem, and that almost all discussions of public library government are either windy, rhetorical endorsements of the ancient board form or an emotional attack upon it by individuals who for one reason or another can hardly be expected to be very objective.20

With the library board as a "given," the next big question, of course, is the relationship between the library director and the library board. Concern for this relationship in library literature has most often been expressed in terms of the policy-making/administration dichotomy.

Garceau traced the historical evolution of the relationship between librarian and board, pointing out that "from 1876 to 1930 the problem of the relationship was continually discussed and nearly all possible
adjustments were suggested to obtain the right balance." During this time period, however, the librarian gained so much power that by 1927, Garceau concluded, "leadership in library government had...come into the hands of the librarian."21

Liljequist surveyed the library board literature from 1876 to 1950, comparing what it said should be the case with what library surveys revealed to be the actual practice in the librarian/board relationship. Among his conclusions, which seemed to agree with those of Garceau, were these: "(1) While in theory trustees and librarians have reached agreed conclusions on the divisions of the broad fields of policy and administration, they have not been carried out in practice, and in many cases are the exact opposite. (2) The biggest reason for the existence of the contradiction between theory and practice lies in the neglect of the library board. In most cases they have practically abdicated their function to the librarian."22

Much of the library literature as mentioned earlier, reflects the policy/administration dichotomy, although Virginia Young has attempted to bypass the issue by saying that the relationship between librarian and board is one in which the duties of each: "fall into roughly parallel areas, the obligations and responsibilities of each are entirely separate....Properly comprehended and performed these parallel duties will strengthen and complement each other without risk of competitive or divided authority."23

Both theory and practice in this sensitive area continue to be somewhat muddled, as Carpenter has noted: "On the one hand it is felt that boards should respect carefully the librarian's superior knowledge, and on the other it is felt that boards should be active and strong initiating policy and aggressively promoting the library."24 These conflicting points of view reflect the confusion which has existed concerning the librarian/board relationship, perhaps much of it due to a faulty conception of the policy-making/administration continuum. (Thirty years ago a political scientist expressed the conviction that the earlier professional belief in the separation of policy and administration was never so clear, consistent, or hard and fast as often had been assumed.25)

There seems to be abundant evidence that "without an excellent director a library board is inevitably very limited in what it can accomplish."26 Monat, Nelson Associates, and Phinney have all stressed that the effective library services found in their studies were dependent upon the library director's ability and dynamic leadership.27 Although this leadership may be crucial, Hamill emphasized the extent to which it depends upon the library board: "For, as against the board, whose
powers are clearly set forth in statute or charter, the librarian seldom has legally defined powers or legally defined duties, except in cases where civil service regulations may specify them. Such powers as he exercises are usually not by statute but by delegation, often unwritten, from the board, and his role in the library's management is based on sufferance."^28

What emerges from these studies and statements is a picture of a dynamic relationship between a library director and the library board. While this is a generalization, it seems reasonable to assume that this relationship exists in libraries of all sizes and may be more crucial in the rural public library, where the magnitude of the problems and the difficulties in dealing with them are potentially greater than in larger libraries.

If one accepts the basic premises of this article, i.e., it is the difficult library environment in which the rural public library trustee functions that is of greatest importance in looking at that trustee's performance, and the duties and responsibilities of all library trustees are essentially the same, then the obvious question becomes: What special qualifications or strengths, if any, might one wish to find in a rural public library trustee?

A preliminary attempt to deal with that issue is made here through analysis of a survey of northwest Iowa public library trustees conducted by Marion F. Rasmussen,^29 and through a small sample of telephone interviews with rural trustees conducted by this author.

The Iowa survey generated 162 returns from the 209 trustees sampled, and 70 returns from the 108 board presidents queried. These trustees were from libraries serving populations ranging from less than 500 to 24,999. The author's survey consisted of 21 interviews with trustees connected to libraries serving populations from 1200 to 7500 in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—a small but geographically diverse sample of trustees. The relevant questions and answers in these two surveys deal with how the library board functions and with the individual trustee's personal preparation and attitudes.

The Iowa survey revealed that 81 percent of the libraries hold regularly scheduled meetings; the nationwide survey indicated that 95 percent of those boards meet regularly. These answers are encouraging, since they seem to indicate a businesslike functioning of those boards. Less encouraging are the answers to the question: "Does the board
conduct an orientation program for new members?" Both surveys showed that the majority of the boards do not (Iowa, 73 percent; nationwide, 62 percent). These results seem to indicate that little effort is made to educate the new trustee, except by experience. Given the magnitude of the problems faced by the rural trustee, one would consider a formal orientation mandatory.

Even more discouraging are the responses to the question: "When did you last attend a continuing education course or meeting?" Iowa results show that almost 72 percent of the trustees do not attend such courses or meetings, and the nationwide survey revealed that 86 percent of those trustees do not participate in continuing education activities.

The Iowa survey revealed that 8.9 percent of library board members serve less than one year; 42.3 percent serve one to six years; 25 percent serve six to twelve years; and 23.7 percent serve more than twelve years. The proportions in the nationwide survey were similar. Thus, one could agree with Rasmussen that: "It is a commonplace of trustee literature that the library trustee should not remain on his board so long as to become jaundiced or indifferent. Moreover, the trustee whose board tenure is long is very likely to have firmly fixed notions of what his library can and should do....The response to this question should put to rest the notion that appointment to the library board is for life."30

Almost half of the trustees in the Iowa survey indicated that they read at least one professional library periodical, and in the nationwide survey the figure was 57 percent. While this is somewhat encouraging, it seems that if approximately 50 percent of public library trustees do not read even one library serial, then at least half of all library trustees are not as well informed as they ought to be. Reading a library publication should not be difficult, in terms of either access or comprehension. Almost 60 percent of the Iowa trustees polled do not belong to a library organization, nor do 81 percent of the trustees in the nationwide survey. Again, this evidence leads one to believe that the level of knowledge of library affairs among trustees cannot be high.

While it is true that the information gathered in these two surveys is not generalizable, that it is tentative and riddled with problems, as preliminary evidence it nevertheless indicates some serious problems. The major concern to which this information should be related is the assumption previously made that rural public library trustees, because of the environmental problems previously referred to, may need to be better informed, and thus more capable, than trustees of any other kind of public library. If this assumption is true, and if the evidence presented here proves valid through research replication, then the library profes-
sion clearly has a major task before it, and perhaps one of some urgency as well.

Given the continued prominence of trustees and the development of trustee governance of public library systems, it seems clear that it would be useful, if not necessary, to give more serious attention to the role of trustees and to their care and feeding by the profession which claims to value their contribution. Like so many others, this author urges more research to assist the library profession in improving its understanding of as well as its work with the public library trustee.

References

1. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Joan Plessner, Public Information Librarian, New Mexico State Library, in the preparation of this article.
5. Ibid., p. 31.
8. Ibid., p. 20.

17. Ibid., p. 96.


23. Young, "Duties and Responsibilities..." op. cit., p. 9.


30. Ibid., p. 12.
Public Library Standards and Rural Library Service

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Public library standards have existed on the national level in the United States for nearly fifty years. State standards for public libraries have existed even longer. Insofar as most public library standards have established guidelines for quality library service to populations in all service areas, library service to rural areas might be considered as part of the standards. But what of the special characteristics and needs of rural libraries and their users? Do the national and state standards provide relevant guidelines for the rural library? It is the intent of this article to examine national and state public library standards to discover the extent to which rural library services have been considered and to identify aspects of the standards that might be especially applicable to rural libraries. It is also hoped that this analysis will result in some indication of the possible direction of future standards for rural library service.

Even a cursory examination of public library standards indicates that few have prescribed specific guidelines for rural library services. The lack of specific references in the standards to "rural services" may lie in the variety of definitions of the terms rural and rural library services. The term rural is often associated with "agricultural" or "sparsely populated" areas. In librarianship it is the characteristic of "size of population" which is most often associated with the term rural—but the population size perceived as rural varies considerably. The Library Services Act of 1956 defined "rural areas"as areas which do
not include a town having a population of more than 10,000 persons. A study prepared for the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Federal Funding of Public Libraries*, characterized "rural" public libraries as those outside Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs). This definition would classify as "rural" some libraries in communities with populations of up to 50,000 that were not in an SMSA. The U.S. Bureau of the Census defines *rural* places as those with populations of less than 2500 outside of urbanized areas. The bureau's definition of *rural* is widely used in data relating to social and population characteristics. Some difficulties exist in applying this definition to library service, since it is not always possible to delineate library service in terms of places of less than 2500 population which are not in urbanized areas. However, because this definition is widely used, and since there is little agreement in public library standards or elsewhere on what constitutes the rural library service area, the Bureau of the Census definition of the term *rural* will be used here as the basis for discussing rural libraries.

**Prior Studies**

There have been a number of analyses and critiques of public library standards. Among the more significant are Lowell Martin's 1972 article in *Library Trends* entitled "Standards for Public Libraries" and Vainstein and Magg's 1959 *State Standards for Public Libraries*. There have also been numerous reactions to the various revisions of the national public library standards, including the lengthy literature that has resulted from efforts to revise the current public library standards by the Public Library Association's Goals, Guidelines, and Standards Committee. But there have been few attempts to analyze public library standards in terms of rural library service. The only such effort that could be located was a 1973 committee print prepared for the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Rural Development of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. The committee print, written by Sandra Osbourn of the Congressional Research Service, consists of two sections. Section I deals with library standards and rural libraries and Section II with the quality of rural library service. Concentrating on the national standards, Osbourn cites many of the problems rural libraries have in meeting the American Library Association's *Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966* and the 1962 *Interim Standards for Small Public Libraries*. Osbourn noted that the development of these two sets of standards represents a "double standard" that exists within the profes-
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sion for large and for small libraries. She concludes that, even with the double standards established by ALA, library service to rural areas often does not meet the standards because of "inherent problems of inadequate resources, scattered population, and in some cases difficult terrain." A closer look at the development and content of national standards may help to evaluate the conclusion reached by Osbourn.

National Standards

Four sets of national standards for public libraries have been published by ALA since 1933. There are few references to rural library service or rural libraries in these standards. Most editions of the national standards do, however, provide guidelines for libraries serving specified population groups. It is recognized that rural libraries or libraries with rural service area responsibilities do not always correspond to the population categories specified. For the purposes of this analysis, however, standards relating to population categories within the range of the U.S. Bureau of the Census's definition of the term rural are assumed to be relevant to rural libraries and rural library service areas. The analysis of the national standards will thus focus on those standards and guidelines directed at smaller public libraries serving areas of under 2500 population. In addition to the four national standards, several commentaries and documents related to the standards will also be examined for relevance to rural library service.

The earliest of the national standards, the 1933 "Standards for Public Libraries," makes no direct reference to rural libraries or rural library service. Some mention is made of libraries in a "city of less than 10,000," but that is the smallest population group specified. The 1933 standards do speak to the problem of the small town which "must usually spend more than $1 per capita to cover minimum essentials, or reduce unit costs by enlarging the area of service and support." Thus, the concept of the larger unit of service is presented as a solution to the problem of support of low population service areas. Little attention is given in the 1933 standards to the clientele of the small libraries who are living in the rural areas.

The 1943 Post-War Standards for Public Libraries devote even less attention to smaller libraries and their clientele. Although a minimum size for library services is not specified, a population of 25,000 is indicated as the threshold for "efficient" library service. The 1943 standards state that: "The smallest independent library unit which can be expected to provide some library service...should have a staff composed
of a professionally trained chief librarian and two full-time assistants." These standards do recognize that sparsely populated areas would have trouble supporting locally organized public library service. It is suggested that small libraries already in existence might contract for supplementary service from a larger library unit. The evolution toward larger units as a solution to the problems of small libraries is clearly another step forward in the 1943 standards, but again, little specific attention is given to the individual libraries with service responsibilities to rural areas.

The 1948 *A National Plan for Public Library Service*, although not a library standard as such, does address the special plight of rural library services. The *National Plan* suggests that rural areas should be served as parts of larger units through branches, deposit stations, and bookmobiles. The need to provide public library service to the rural resident, whom the national plan characterizes as the "forgotten man in library service," becomes the central argument for the establishment of larger units of public library service. It is also the central focus of the effort for federal assistance to public libraries which culminated in the Library Services Act (LSA) in 1956 and set the direction for the 1956 standards which emphasized library systems.

The 1956 standards state that the community library should be part of a library system. The population categories discussed include groups smaller than those of the 1943 standards. The 1956 standards are also more ambitious in terms of guidelines for personnel. One full-time staff member for every 2000 people in the service area is prescribed. Libraries serving populations of 5000 or more are expected to have a full-time professional librarian. Those libraries serving less than 5000 population should have "close and regular guidance by professional personnel." The 1956 standards note that it would require twice as much per capita financial support for a library or a group of libraries serving a population of 20,000 to meet the minimum standard as it would for a library serving a population of 200,000. Thus, the concept of a larger unit of service is clearly endorsed as the most efficient way of providing library service. Nevertheless, considerably more attention is paid to libraries serving smaller populations than in the earlier standards.

The publication of the 1956 standards began a very eventful period for rural library development. Concern about the lack of service to rural residents was central to the Library Services Act of 1956. Its purpose was to extend library services to rural areas that had no service or inadequate service. For the first time, many rural areas were introduced
to library service. The number of persons served by public libraries eventually tripled. But not everyone felt that the approach taken by LSA was the best way to improve library services to rural areas.

In a conference sponsored by the University of Illinois in fall 1961, Lowell Martin discussed library standards and the Library Services Act. He raised some questions regarding the effectiveness of the effort to establish adequate library service to rural residents. Martin felt at that time that LSA had resulted in the fragmentation of library services and had sacrificed the strength of central libraries for the convenience of branches and bookmobiles. It was his opinion that the emphasis on extension of services to rural populations within the context of limited funds meant that in-depth services had to be sacrificed. He raised the issue of whether the primary effect of LSA had been to increase the number of people receiving substandard library service. He also questioned why libraries should be different from other types of services, such as hospitals, schools, and shopping centers. The others have all followed the trend toward consolidation, but library service is the one service which we assume people will not use unless it is brought physically close to them. As to the relevance of the 1956 national standards, Martin felt that they were reasonable, appropriate, and necessary, and should be met as soon as possible.

It quickly became evident that all did not agree with Martin’s call for applying the 1956 standards to all libraries as soon as possible. Perhaps it was the recognition of the fiscal reality of public library support, especially in rural areas, that led to the publication of Interim Standards for Small Public Libraries in 1962. These standards were to be “interim” in the sense that they were to be applied until small libraries could join public library systems. The introduction to the Interim Standards acknowledged that “many librarians feel that no separate standards should be established for small libraries” because they believe that separate standards would encourage the small library to remain small and delay the development of public library systems. The Subcommittee on Standards for Small Libraries responded that since two-thirds of the libraries in the United States serve populations under 10,000, whatever could be done to improve the services of this substantial group would benefit library development in general. Not being able to come to an agreement on a definition of the “small” library, the subcommittee decided to present standards for groups of libraries serving populations of 2500 to 50,000. It was assumed that the estimated 40 percent of the public libraries which serve populations of less than 2500 should meet the qualitative standards set for the 2500-50,000 population
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Some quantitative standards were provided for the libraries serving populations under 2500. These included standards for hours of service, materials, and staff.

The Interim Standards are unique in terms of their continuing status. Unlike the other national standards, they were not superseded by the 1966 standards for library systems, because the Interim Standards are concerned with libraries not yet part of library systems. The Interim Standards provide guidelines for small libraries until the libraries join systems. These standards can continue to be in effect as long as there are independent, small public libraries. For the first time, the small public library had been recognized by national standards and specific guidelines developed for them. Although neither the rural library nor rural library service is specifically mentioned, the Interim Standards do apply to most independent rural libraries by virtue of the size of the population most rural libraries serve.

In 1966 the Public Library Association approved a set of standards for public library systems. Thus evolved what has been termed the "double standard" for public libraries in the United States: the Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966 concentrated on larger units of service, while the Interim Standards concentrated on library services to smaller populations not part of larger units of service.

The 1966 standards stated that the philosophy of library systems is based on the assumption that "people need similar library resources whether they live in cities, in suburbs, or in rural areas." Although it was recognized that rural areas will differ from urban areas in terms of the specific nature of the materials and services provided, neither the relationship of the rural library to the library system nor the special needs for rural library service is explicitly defined in the 1966 standards. The independence of the community library is discussed, and it is noted that "some degree of independence must be sacrificed" if library users are going to be provided with greater resources and services. Access to library service is seen as a necessity for every community, but it was stated that those communities without sufficient tax resources should operate within a library system. Although there are few references to rural libraries or libraries serving communities with small populations, the 1966 standards do state that the library should have one staff member for every 2000 people in the service area, and that the community library should have a professional staff member available to provide services to the public during all hours the library is open.

In 1967 the Public Library Association appended statistical stand-
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ards to the 1966 standards. These addenda specified that the community library in rural areas should be within thirty minutes' travel time of users. This is one of the few standards that specifically mentions service to rural areas. But the financial problem of providing such services is not approached in the addenda. Although the 1966 standards and addenda are among the first to indicate specific standards relating to rural areas, they do so on a very limited basis.

Since 1972 the Goals, Guidelines, and Standards Committee of the Public Library Association has been working on a revision of the 1966 standards. In the course of their deliberations, various position statements and working papers have been issued. One of the few references to problems relevant to rural service was in the "Task Force on Children's Services Working Paper." This task force spoke to the removal of barriers deterring use of libraries by children: "These include physical and geographical remoteness of materials and services." As far as could be determined, none of the other working papers mentions geographical remoteness or other characteristics that might be considered relevant to rural library services.

In 1977 the Goals, Guidelines, and Standards Committee of the Public Library Association issued "A Mission Statement for Public Libraries." This statement has been slightly revised and reissued in 1979 with a statement on "Imperatives for Service." These statements are to be used to develop guidelines for service until revision of the 1966 standards is completed. The mission statement concentrates on measure of library output rather than input. This approach may change the emphasis on minimum size of population served and provide the opportunity for smaller libraries and libraries serving rural areas to find relevant guidelines for measuring their activities. Manuals are being prepared for use by public libraries which will enable each library to individualize its services for its clientele. It is too early to determine the exact impact of the new direction of thinking on national library standards, but it will undoubtedly have an effect on rural libraries and rural library services.

It is evident from the examination of national standards that there is little attention given to rural library services or the rural library. Most of the emphasis has been placed on larger units of service, with library systems assumed to be the most efficient way of providing adequate service to all populations. Only in the course of revising the 1966 standards has much attention been paid to the local library and its special clientele.
State Standards

As noted above, state standards predate national public library standards: New York State established public library standards in the nineteenth century. The interest of individual states in developing their own standards did not end with the publication of national standards for public libraries by the American Library Association. In 1958, after twenty-five years of national standards, Vainstein and Magg found that twenty states had their own standards. In 1975 Ladd Boyd, in a study submitted to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, found that thirty-five states had their own standards. The growth of state standards is undoubtedly due to many factors, but the general nature of the national standards may have influenced many states to develop public library standards that reflect the characteristics and needs of their libraries. Many include separate standards for libraries serving small populations. Most of the state standards for public libraries also include quantitative guidelines specifying the number of staff, volumes, service hours, and other variables in terms much more specific than those of the national standards. To determine the current status of state library standards for public libraries, a survey of state agencies was conducted in late 1978 and early 1979. Thirty-five states were identified as having public library standards or guidelines. For purposes of this analysis, no distinction is made between “standards” and “guidelines.” The terms will be used interchangeably in the discussion, even though some of the state agencies referred to “guidelines” and others referred to “standards.”

As in the analysis of national standards, the primary concern here in the analysis of state standards is with the provision of standards for the smaller library or the smaller population service area which might be considered relevant to rural library services. The state standards that specify criteria for measuring performance of smaller libraries do not necessarily come from rural states. Of the eight states with more than 50 percent of their population listed as rural by the County and City Data Book, only two have standards that specify criteria for libraries serving populations of less than 2500. Three of the predominantly rural states do not have separate state standards, and the other three do not provide specific guidelines in their standards for libraries in categories of less than 2500 population. It is recognized, of course, that the proportion of the total state population that falls under the Bureau of the Census’s definition of “rural” does not necessarily reflect the extent of development or the relative significance of rural libraries in the state. Some
states have a large number of small libraries in rural areas, but also have large urban concentrations. Both New York and Illinois are over 80 percent urban, yet each has several hundred public libraries serving populations of 2500 or less. Some of these are small towns in urban areas, but many are just as rural as those rural libraries in Nebraska and West Virginia and other "rural" states.

When standards of the thirty-five states were examined for guidelines that might apply to rural libraries or rural library service by virtue of size of population, certain patterns relating to service became evident. Five of the more commonly listed categories found in the state standards are: (1) number of staff, (2) educational requirements for librarians, (3) hours of service, (4) number of volumes, and (5) physical space. Summary data are presented for these five categories in Tables 1-5. Not all of the state standards have guidelines relating to every category, thus the number of states listed varies from table to table. Twenty-five of the state standards examined specify guidelines for staffing of public libraries (Table 1). Although over 70 percent of the standards examined specify guidelines for staffing in relation to population served, less than 50 percent are concerned with population levels of 2500 or less. The majority of the states either set staffing guidelines at levels higher than 2500 or do not set staffing guidelines in relation to population served at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Least One Staff Member per:</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
<th>Percentage of States with Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000 population or less</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2500 population</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000-4000 population</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 or over</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 provides data on the minimum educational qualifications for head librarians. Although less than half of the states covered have guidelines for minimum educational qualifications, the majority of those that do specify something less than a master's degree in library science. In fact, the high school diploma is indicated as the minimum
educational qualification in 40 percent of the states specifying minimum educational requirements. Most of the standards in which a high school diploma is stated as the minimum requirement are for libraries serving populations of 2500 or less. Rhode Island, however, does specify the high school diploma as the minimum educational level for librarians in libraries serving as many as 5000 persons. Two of the three states that have established the master's degree in library science as the minimum educational requirement do so for libraries of all sizes. Illinois calls for the services of a "professionally trained librarian either directly employed by the library board, contracted for through the library system, or jointly employed by two or more libraries." Ohio specifies that the director of any library should be "professionally trained." Idaho recommends that libraries serving populations of more than 5000 have professionally trained librarians. Educational requirements for librarians in libraries serving fewer than 5000 persons are not specified in the Idaho standards.

As indicated in Table 3, nearly half of the standards specify twenty or fewer hours per week as minimum hours of service. All the standards that set fewer than twenty hours a week for service did so for libraries serving populations of 2500 or less. It seems that many states are resigned to limited hours for small libraries, or are at least realistic in terms of the potential support for hours of service in small-population areas.

Table 4 presents the minimum number of volumes specified in the various state standards. Although twenty-two (68 percent) of the states with standards do specify a minimum number of volumes per library, only eight of these do so specifically for libraries serving 2500 or less. Ten of the twenty-two do not specify population as a criterion for minimum number of volumes. It might be assumed that the guidelines in these ten states would apply to all libraries, regardless of the size of population served. The smallest population specified for minimum volumes ranges from 250 or less (Kansas and Nebraska) to 10,000 (Minnesota). Many states use a "volume per capita" formula as well as the minimum volume figure and indicate that a library should use whichever results in a greater number of volumes. Only the minimum volume figure is considered in Table 4.

Table 5 is concerned with standards that specify minimum square footage for public libraries. Most state standards do not indicate a minimum square footage. Of the fifteen that do, six do so for libraries serving populations of 2500 or less. These range from 1000 square feet (North Dakota) to 2800 square feet (Iowa). Table 5 indicates that the
### TABLE 2. MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR HEAD LIBRARIANS IN STATE STANDARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
<th>Percentage of States with Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two years of college</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four years of college</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree in library science</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3. MINIMUM HOURS OF SERVICE SPECIFIED IN STATE STANDARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours per Week</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
<th>Percentage of States with Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4. MINIMUM NUMBER OF VOLUMES SPECIFIED IN STATE STANDARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Volumes</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
<th>Percentage of States with Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 2,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000-3,500</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000-8,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000-50,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other guidelines*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Including standards that specify a per capita guideline but not number of volumes, as well as those standards that do not include any guidelines for materials.
majority of the standards providing guidelines for minimum square footage specify 2000 square feet or less. Ohio tops the list with 8000 square feet as the minimum specified.

**TABLE 5. MINIMUM SQUARE FOOTAGE FOR PHYSICAL FACILITIES SPECIFIED IN STATE STANDARDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Square Footage</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
<th>Percentage of States with Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000-1750</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2500-3500</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6000-8000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other guidelines*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes those standards that give guidelines for specific funding or facilities, but not for total facility.

A sixth category found in most of the state standards is financial support. There is considerably more variation from state to state in the standards for financial support than for the other categories. Some states specify minimum budgets; these range from $3000 to $15,000. Other states specify per capita support minimums, ranging from $4 to $10.50. Still other states specify financial support in terms of tax rates. Because of the diversity of approaches to establishing minimums for financial support in the state standards, it is not possible to make a meaningful generalization regarding patterns. Part of the difference may reflect the rapid inflation rate in recent years, with the newer or more recently revised standards reflecting the inflated dollar value. But some of the difference may reflect the different perceptions of resources for support of public libraries in various states. State standards specifying minimum budgets seem to reflect the attitude of the national standards, i.e., that smaller libraries serving smaller population areas have to spend more per capita than libraries serving larger population areas.

**Comparison of State and National Standards**

State standards give considerably more attention to smaller libraries than do national standards. Even the *Interim Standards for Small Public Libraries* does not include guidelines for population service areas as small as those included in many state standards. By comparing some of the most recent national standards, the 1962 *Interim Standards*
and the *Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966*, with the various state standards for public libraries, the following similarities and differences become evident. The 1966 *Minimum Standards* call for one staff member per 2000 population. The *Interim Standards* specify from one to one and one-half full-time equivalent staff members as the minimum for libraries serving less than 2500. Both sets of national standards are in agreement with most of the state standards examined, although 25 percent of the states' standards do specify minimum staffing for areas with populations higher than 2500.

The difference between state and national standards for minimum educational requirements for librarians is greater than that for number of staff. The *Minimum Standards* specify that one of the three staff members for every 6000 served should be a professionally trained librarian. The *Interim Standards* specify employment of a college graduate for the library serving less than 5000 population. Both sets of national standards establish levels considerably above the minimum educational requirements in most of the state standards. Three-quarters of those state standards specifying minimum educational requirements indicate two years of college or a high school diploma as the minimum educational level required.

The *Minimum Standards* do not specify minimum hours for libraries serving fewer than 10,000. The 1962 *Interim Standards* specify fifteen hours per week as the minimum hours of service in a small library. The state standards vary considerably from this minimum with eleven states exceeding it, and eight having minimums of less than fifteen hours.

The *Minimum Standards* provide quantitative guidelines for materials for library systems only. The *Interim Standards* specify 10,000 volumes as the minimum size of a book collection for a small community library. Most state standards differ greatly from the national standards on number of volumes required. Only four of the state standards list minimum volume guidelines which exceed the 10,000-volume minimum of the *Interim Standards*. Four states have guidelines that match those of the *Interim Standards*, and fourteen specify material holdings below that of the *Interim Standards*.

The *Minimum Standards* do not specify minimum size for physical facilities for community libraries. The *Interim Standards* specify 2000 square feet as the minimum. It appears that some states have adopted the *Interim Standards* on physical space, since 20 percent of the standards examined also indicate 2000 square feet as the minimum. However, almost as many states have exceeded the 2000-square-feet minimum of the *Interim Standards*. 
Minimum level of financial support is not specified in either of the national standards. As noted above, in most instances the state standards do not specify minimum financial guidelines. This is an area which both the national and the state standards seem to avoid.

In summary, the state standards have less stringent guidelines than those of the national standards in the areas of educational requirements for librarians and minimum size of book collections. In guidelines regarding hours of service and size of staff there are relatively few differences between state and national standards. In the area of minimum square footage for physical facilities, a number of states exceed the national standards, but most of the state standards that specify total square footage are either the same as or below the national standards. The smaller library would, in general, have less difficulty meeting state standards than the national standards. It is evident that the state standards give more consideration to smaller libraries than do the national standards.

Rural Libraries and Existing Standards

As we have seen, national and state standards do not pay much attention to rural library service as a separate category of concern. Many of the state standards are, however, concerned with smaller libraries, which in most states would include a large number of rural libraries. Rural library service received the attention of the federal government and of state library agencies through the legislation establishing the Library Services Act. One effort to measure the results of the federal legislation against the various state standards adopted took place in 1976 when the ALA Washington Office conducted a survey of state library agencies on the progress made in the twenty years of the Library Services Act (LSA) and the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). The report of this survey was published in 1977 as part of the hearings on the Library Services and Construction Act Amendments of 1977. Because the first eight years of the federal legislation concentrated on library services to rural areas, some of the questions directed toward the progress of LSA and LSCA can serve as an indication of the progress of rural library service. Since much of the population that was unserved when LSA began in 1956 could be classified as "rural," the ALA survey is one of the few evaluations of programs which include library services to rural areas.

The ALA survey reports that in 1956 thirty-eight states had some counties without public library service; in 1976 there were eighteen such
states. Thus, an important improvement in reaching the unserved was accomplished in the twenty years of federal programs. Of these eighteen states, however, ten had over 20 percent of their counties without library service, and two states (North Dakota and South Dakota) had over 50 percent of their counties without library service.

According to the standards adopted by each state, 3 percent of the total population of the United States had adequate library service, 16 percent had no service, and 81 percent had inadequate service in 1956. In 1976, 13 percent had adequate service and 4 percent had no service, but 83 percent had inadequate service when measured against the standards adopted by each state. Although there was an increase in the percentage of people served adequately, the percentage with inadequate service also increased. "Inadequate" may be an improvement over "no service," but much remains to be done in most instances to bring this service up to adequate levels. In 1956 seven states indicated that they had adequate service for 100 percent of their population; in 1976 twelve indicated that they had adequate service for all their population. That leaves thirty-eight states with overall public library services less than adequate when measured by the adopted standard of the state. Given the fact that 7 percent of the nation's libraries in urban areas receive 55 percent of the total public library funding and 65 percent of the nation's public libraries in rural areas receive only 17 percent of total funding, one might assume that the rural library is represented heavily in the "inadequate" category in most states. Clearly, rural libraries are just as much the "forgotten man in library service" today as they were in 1948. National and state standards essentially ignore rural public libraries or else downgrade guidelines to the point that what would be inadequate for others becomes adequate for rural library service.

Identification of Elements Unique to Rural Library Service

In the course of gathering information on state standards for public libraries, each of the state agencies was asked to comment on the special characteristics and needs of rural libraries which might be taken into consideration in developing public library standards at the state or national level. A number of respondents were not supportive of the concept of separate standards for rural libraries. Some felt it would be best to concentrate on standards for regional systems. Others felt that interim standards for the small rural library would be acceptable if set at a realistic level. Although there was no clear consensus in favor of separate standards, most respondents identified two or more special
TERRY WEECH

needs of rural libraries which might be considered in developing national or state standards.

Table 6 presents a summary of the forty-eight responses received from the fifty state agencies surveyed. Only those characteristics cited by three or more state agency respondents are included in the table. Funding for rural library service is clearly a primary concern of the state agencies and probably underlies most of the other concerns expressed. Adequate staffing, collection development, and hours of service are difficult to maintain without appropriate funding. Because rural libraries by definition serve sparsely populated areas, per capita costs of service are necessarily high. Rural areas seldom have the strength of the tax base that urban areas have. Thus, rural areas are caught in a vicious circle of needing more money to provide adequate services, yet having fewer resources for obtaining that money.

TABLE 6. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF RURAL LIBRARIES AS IDENTIFIED BY THREE OR MORE STATE LIBRARY AGENCY RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Number of Times Cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funds</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for cooperative activity</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate staffing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic isolation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for improved collection development</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for special methods of delivery of materials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited hours of service</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guidelines relating to cooperative activities are also considered important by the state agency respondents. The need for increased cooperative activity undoubtedly reflects the "larger unit" orientation of most of the national and state standards, but many of the respondents from state agencies see even more need for cooperative efforts.

Staffing, as noted in the analysis of the state standards, is one area where many states have made special adjustments through establishing guidelines which are less stringent than the national standards. Staffing is the third most frequently noted area of concern of the respondents from the state agencies.

Geographic isolation was listed by only nine state agency respondents. It may be that improved telecommunications and better delivery systems have overcome some of the barriers of service to rural areas. It is
also possible that geographic isolation varies considerably from state to state. Certainly, for those libraries and library users that have problems of geographic isolation, it is a significant barrier to adequate library service.

One might argue that most of the "special characteristics and needs" identified by the state library respondents are really not unique to rural libraries. Urban libraries can certainly claim some of the same needs, especially the need for more funds. But these special characteristics and needs are particularly crucial for many rural libraries which are operating on very limited financial resources. In Iowa, for example, more than 180 libraries reported total annual expenditures of less than $5000 in 1977-78. It is difficult to do much in the way of providing adequate library service with such limited finances. It is not for lack of local support that these small libraries have such limited financial resources. Many are supported at per capita rates considerably above those specified in state and national standards. As noted earlier, it is the inherent sparsity of population of rural areas that leads to limited financial support and thus makes it difficult to compare them with urban areas.

**Conclusion**

Larger units of service, of course, have been the traditional solution for the problem of providing service to sparsely populated areas. As has been noted above, the national standards have evolved to the point of considering only libraries that are part of library systems. Larger units of library service have been effective in many areas, but the development of library systems has also resulted in the increase of the number of small libraries in rural areas providing less than adequate library service. The attention given by many state standards to small libraries suggests that the need to set standards for such libraries has been recognized.

If adequate rural public library service is to be provided to those who now have inadequate service, considerably more attention will have to be paid to relevant standards and guidelines for rural library service. The approach to establishing standards for public libraries through local needs assessment promises to be a challenge to rural libraries. We may be entering the era of the "multiple standard" which will replace the "double standard" that has existed in the past. But there are some important challenges ahead for libraries providing services to rural areas. Although needs assessment at the local level may help establish a better awareness of appropriate services, financial support
and staffing will remain a problem in most areas. The ability to distinguish between "needs" and "wants" will become crucial. Rural library service in many areas has been available at a level so much below that provided in urban areas that expectations of rural residents may be considerably lower than those of their urban counterparts. The involvement of the community, of course, will be an important factor in determining the future quality of rural library service. Clearly, past techniques of establishing standards have not always been successful. It is hoped that the proposed techniques for determining standards at the local level will be able to stimulate the adjustment of resources to meet the needs, rather than an adjustment of needs to meet the resources. The Public Library Mission Statement and Its Imperatives for Service may provide a new opportunity for rural libraries to formulate appropriate standards and guidelines, but the inherent inefficiency of smaller units of service will still have to be confronted.

References

7. Osbourn, op. cit., p. 3.
8. Ibid., p. 16.
10. Ibid., p. 514.
12. Ibid., p. 46.
13. Ibid., p. 78.
16. Ibid., p. 34.
Public Library Standards and Rural Library Service

18. Ibid., p. 43.
22. Ibid., p. 6.
23. Ibid., p. 12.
24. Ibid., p. 9.
25. Ibid., p. 2.
27. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 11.
30. Ibid., p. 54.
31. Ibid., pp. 65-68.
32. Ibid., p. 65.
34. Ibid., p. 27.
39. Ibid., p. 2.
46. Ibid., p. 56.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 47.
49. Ibid., pp. 54, 55.
Assessing the Information Needs of Rural People: The Development of an Action Strategy for Rural Librarians

DANIEL BARRON
CHARLES CURRAN

THE COMMUNITY INFORMATION NEEDS/Library Services (CIN/LS) project was undertaken primarily to address what the study team observed as a series of problems related to the public library's role in the delivery of information to rural citizens. The major problem or issue was acknowledged as a familiar one—one which was much easier to identify than to tackle. Stated briefly, people require information and the mission of libraries is to acquire and disseminate information to meet the needs of people in their service areas. The question becomes, therefore, "How can libraries best accomplish this mission?" 

Background

If the problem were as easy to solve as it is to state, it would have been solved ages ago. This project has not produced the ultimate solution to the problem of how public libraries should respond to their environments, but the CIN/LS Guide is seen as supplying some direction for librarians who are interested in achieving a match between community needs and library programs.
The team set out to construct a step-by-step procedure for librarians to use in relating their materials acquisition and program development activities to community information needs. Researchers who attempt in the laboratory to fashion a credible instrument for use by practitioners in the real world must quickly identify and deal with several major problems. Very early in their work, the team noted three problem areas: (1) tolerable levels of abstraction, (2) systems considerations, and (3) communicability.

**Abstraction**

Descriptive and prescriptive components of a model are easily pieced together. Libraries, like other public service agencies, should exist to meet the needs of their communities, and librarians should find ways to discover these needs and then acquire materials and provide services which address those needs (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Community Needs/Library Response](image)

The large circle represents the community. The smaller circle in its center represents the library. The community has needs which library personnel should identify and match with appropriate acquisition, delivery, and program activities—very simple.

But the ease with which such simple models are conceived may prompt planners to construct models which, though they appear simple, are in reality so abstract that they defy implementation in the real world. Such models may provide some help in establishing goals for public service agencies, but they merely describe a small portion of an
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issue. They can only serve to provide partial graphic representation of deceptively complex relationships. Where they omit attention to managerial components and financial constraints, they are deficient. Such models ignore the system and are impossible to effectuate.¹

Systems Considerations

The superimposition of an abstract and simplistic model upon an environment with unresolved problems related to the interconnectedness and interdependency of social forces, human yearnings, decision-making environments, and fiscal machinations dooms the model. The study team observed that if the CIN/LS Guide were ever to become operational, its developers would have to acknowledge that a grasp of traditional library science was necessary, perhaps, but certainly not sufficient for dealing with problems faced by rural librarians; and that the penalties of geographical isolation, compounded by the rather low level of visibility of many rural libraries, would have to be addressed by a credible, convincing, and communicative plan.

Communicability

The demands of communicating with numbers of people in rural library service, people who may have limited opportunities for formal library training—of the preservice, in-service, or continuing education type—prompted the study team to aim at producing a guide which was as jargon-free as possible. So, a balance between sophistication and communicability was sought—one which might be achieved by including the credible findings and observations of other persons who had investigated problems of rural library service in a guide that could be interpreted and implemented by library clerks and systems directors alike.

Preliminary Considerations

In attempting to produce a guide which would help rural librarians achieve a match between community needs and library services, the team faced the issue of defining rural. The designation of rural areas was based upon two components: numbers and geography. Choosing the areas for study was aided by identifying states in the Southeast which contained numerous political subdivisions having 2500 or fewer people, and by the identification of conditions of geographical isolation. It could be claimed that this dodges the responsibility to define rural precisely. As imprecise as the "definition" may be, librarians in rural
service have little trouble observing that their communities are more sparsely populated and spread over larger land masses than those of their counterparts in urban service. The study team generally observed that the rural librarians did not require a definition; they lived one.

The survey of the literature (reviewed here, but cited more fully in the accompanying bibliography) revealed that others had explored the problems of rural libraries in some detail. Penalties of isolation, existing information needs, and methods for dealing with problems related to the delivery of information in rural areas were all topics which had received considerable attention. So the task of the study team became concerned with consolidating the landmark findings into one guide—one unabashed hybrid, a “cookbook” approach to problem-solving. How they would explain and defend their project in the research community became a subordinate concern. They saw as their major goal the communication of a doable set of instructions, the execution of which might result in better library service, increased visibility for the library, and more convincing data for presentation to funders.

Armed with already-established conceptual frameworks, modified for communication, the study team embarked on fact-finding missions that took them to the state library agencies in nine southeastern states, and to TVA, NEA, Rural America, Inc., the National Rural Center, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and USOE Regional Planning Offices. The team acknowledged that one does not “know the community” simply by living in it, and participated in the Community Analysis program sponsored by Community Analysis Associates because they wanted the guide to have a strong “how to know the community” component. Conferences with George Eyster of the Appalachian Adult Education Center (AAEC) at Morehead State University and with the staff at the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship at Clarion State College (Pennsylvania) helped give dimension to the task at hand. Most importantly, talking with concerned people at the local levels—librarians in rural service—helped the team see problem areas which a review of the literature alone could not have provided.

The Guide

The Guide developed by the study team is an eight-part action strategy which requires library personnel to observe the local community actively, compare local library service programs with the particular needs of that community, develop specific service plans to address those needs, and publicize and promote these services among the people who can benefit from them.
Assessing Information Needs

Specifically, the guide involves eight areas to be observed in sequence:

1. Getting Started (rationale for making the effort)
2. Your Community
3. Community Information Needs
4. Community Service Agencies
5. Library Programs
6. Library Materials
7. Plans
8. Spreading the Word

In essence, the Guide provides a "cookbook" approach to matching collections and programs to actual information needs and for publicizing these efforts in a way that would make the librarian and the library visible in the community.

The study team strove for simplicity and communicability, and the guide is an unabashed reinvention of the wheel insofar as "discovery" is concerned. The worth of the product lies in its doability and its potential for helping to weave the library more fully into the fabric of community existence. Librarians in rural service who participated in field tests liked the Guide and indicated that it could be used to advantage in their systems.

Findings Resulting from Field Tests and Implications for Planners

The solution to a puzzle requires the creative application of relevant clues. Useful statements about social puzzles may be provided by people who know and ask relevant questions about their environment. If librarians in rural service are to address substantially the problems of serving rural populations, they and all participants in the decision-making environment must understand the specific nature of the problems. As a result of the study team's construction and field testing of the Guide, there are clear indications that these participants need help.

There are some preconditions that must be met if help is to be forthcoming. First, the myths of ruralness must be abandoned. Second, the "rural crisis" must be understood. Third, the penalties of rural isolation—penalties suffered not only by citizens, but also by librarians who serve them—must be considered. Fourth, librarians must discover ways to achieve a match between community information needs and library services. Fifth, cooperation must be more broadly conceptualized and implemented.
These understandings are minimum prerequisites. The study team is convinced that any efforts to address the problems of rural library service must be based upon a thorough understanding of the five points listed above. They are necessary and fundamental concerns which must underpin any serious plan for developing library services in rural America.

**Rural Mythology**

Planners must de-mythologize their notions about rural regions. The vast majority of rural Americans are not farmers. The *Commodity Year Book 1979* presents data showing that while farm production is rising, the number of people involved in that production is declining.\(^3\) The study team’s observations in ten predominantly rural states give these data experiential amplification. At the national level, the decline in the number of farm workers has been clearly demonstrated.\(^4\) In South Carolina, a rural state by any standard, the number of farms and acres farmed show steady and substantial decline, while the number of textile mills and persons employed in them indicate trends in the opposite direction.\(^5\)

Mythological notions about rural conditions provide a fertile field for dated concepts of library service, such as those built upon the mistaken belief that the rural agricultural extension services can provide all the survival information that rural citizens need, or concepts built upon pious legends of the past as reported in *Rural America Reads*.\(^6\) It is essential that librarians conceive more broadly based service responses to meet the information needs of a rural society. The needs list, adopted from the work of Drennan and Shelby and of Dervin\(^7\) and developed in the *Guide*, therefore, consists of twenty-six categories, only one of which relates directly to agricultural concerns.

Rural librarians will pay an awful price if they use yesterday’s ideas and tools to address today’s problems. Nature and society impose a severe penalty on creatures and institutions which do not continue to evolve. They are condemned to a scavenger’s existence. Rural public libraries which do not evolve face a similar fate and will find their existence dependent upon droppings.

**Rural Crisis**

Much has been written about the urban and suburban crisis. Rural geographers add findings which clearly point to the “systems” nature of societal ills. While observers of the urban crisis describe increased demands for urban services in the face of shrinking tax support for those
services, rural researchers show that the migration of rural citizens to urban and suburban areas is one of the causes of those increased demands for services.

The out-migration is a function of declining employment opportunities for rural persons in their most productive years. This depopulation and the related problem of limited opportunities to gain job skills through education in some rural areas are two of the conditions which discourage human service professionals and industries requiring skilled labor from locating in some rural areas, despite Sun Belt tax breaks. The cyclic aspects of the rural/urban crisis create an economic and educational "catch 22" for rural citizens. Maslovian theory suggests that hungry, unemployed, or indigent adults are not likely to beat a path to rural libraries and demand *Johnny Tremain*—not even the paperback edition. Traditionally, librarians have plugged into Maslow's hierarchy closer to the top, collecting materials and offering programs which tend to relate more to persons seeking self-actualization rather than to persons who are uncertain of a living wage. Shiny new books alone are no more the answer to the rural library crisis than they are to the urban library crisis.

**Isolation**

The most important factors that planners of rural library services must take into account are those associated with the penalties of geographical isolation. The energy crunch and the fact that the chief method of transportation in rural areas is the private automobile combine to exacerbate isolation problems. Drennan and Shelby have pinpointed the main problems associated with isolation. The next essential step must be to understand more fully the information-seeking behavior of persons who suffer the penalties of that isolation. Such persons tend to rely upon personal rather than institutional contact (with the exception of the church) for information. They are media-oriented, but the media they use to become informed and entertained are the telephone and the television. Librarians and planners who seek to weave the library into the fabric of rural existence must learn to deal with isolation—not only their patrons', but also their own. The same isolation which keeps rural citizens remote from "what's happening at your public library" keeps the librarians isolated from preservice and continuing education opportunities.

**Matching Needs with Services**

There are deceptively complex properties of this matching require-
One of librarianship's current bandwagon terms is \textit{needs assessment}, and the continuing educationists appear to hold the franchise and distributorship rights. Needs assessment instruments and methodologies are often directed at librarians, and the supposition is that librarians can know and report what their needs are. In truth, many librarians in rural service do not know what their needs are, and they express their problems in terms which clearly indicate that they see them as money-related or as related to the need for acquiring better management skills. Indeed, many are, but an equal number of problems faced by librarians in rural areas relate to their frustration over the public's nonuse of library materials and services. As a matter of fact, urban librarians suffer the same frustrations. As long as librarians continue to remain book- and thing-oriented, instead of information- and people-oriented, citizens will continue to ignore the library. Citizens may see the book as neither crucial to their survival needs nor important to their entertainment needs. Librarians who sit and wait for such rural citizens to present their demands to the system will have a long wait, for sitting and waiting will never raise the citizens' levels of expectations for library service. Citizens conditioned to think of the library as a place which stores irrelevant items will regard the librarian as the custodian of those irrelevancies rather than as an individual who has something real and important to offer them. An alternative to the sitting and waiting is to engage in the kinds of community analysis approaches developed by Roger Greer and available at the many workshops he and his associates conduct throughout the country.\textsuperscript{8}

Compounding these problems is the fact that the question "What are my information needs today?" is not one which the average citizen, rural or urban, asks himself each day. This does not mean that citizens do not \textit{have} information needs, but that survival, educational, and entertainment issues just do not find expression in the same terms that occur to some information scientists, library educators, and librarians who, while their thoughts on matching needs with services are crystal clear to them, do not communicate well with citizens and do not provide adequate mechanisms for the citizens to communicate with the librarians. Add to these considerations the fact that many rural librarians choose to remain outside the mainstream of political decision-making activity, and the complexity of the matching problem comes more clearly into view. When rural politicians question why the local public library \textit{and} the school library in the same community each need a projector or the \textit{same} encyclopedia title (and they do ask\textsuperscript{9}), it becomes
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obvious that librarians and holders of pursestrings are not communica-
ting effectively.

Cooperation

Throughout the region studied, the team observed that communi-
cation among agencies with related missions was often poor or nonex-
istent. Although there have been significant attempts to improve this
condition—for example, the Appalachian Adult Education Center pro-
jects, the attempts to regionalize public libraries, and some efforts
related to the White House conference—there is still considerable need
to improve communication among those institutions whose function it
is to help people obtain the information they need. At this time it seems
especially critical that improved communication exist between and
among school libraries, existing agencies in the community, and the
public library. The rationale and benefits of such cooperation have been
listed and described by others, but the study team was constantly
reminded of the absence of this communication. To outside observers
with a commitment to view the various communities visited objectively
and to listen to the agency personnel interviewed, it became obvious that
such improved communication could be critical to agencies interested
in providing service without wasteful duplication and in expanding
currently available responses with minimal additional support.

The idea of a cooperative approach to solving information and
library service problems in rural areas extends beyond the sharing of
resources by types of libraries and agencies. Librarians and decision-
makers in agencies whose missions include the stimulation of library
service development must also carefully consider their interrelatedness
and effect remedies where communication is lacking. In addition,
library educators, professional associations, and practitioners at all
levels must actively seek and establish firmer lines of communication
among themselves.

The penalties of isolation affecting the librarian have been consid-
ered earlier in this article, but they are especially severe when they
interfere with cooperation and communication and the needs for library
education, both preservice and in-service. The study team was told time
and time again that those with little or no formal library education
could not travel to the nearest library education program, the question
of accreditation notwithstanding. Family responsibilities, lack of finan-
cial assistance, time constraints, the almost total dependence in rural
areas upon personal transportation, and the increasing costs of fuel
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prescribe the need for more educational programs at the local level. This does not imply that individuals should not be encouraged to participate in existing, on-campus library education programs which lead to a degree or to certification. The fact is that the educational needs of librarians now serving in rural areas are substantial. These persons, with or without educational provisions, are likely to continue in rural service for some time. It is hoped that certification requirements and individual motivation will stimulate some local library personnel to seek further education. This could be engineered by a cooperative venture of educators and state associations. Failure to take advantage of such a cooperative effort at this time seems unthinkable. Communications technology innovations and educational progress in the area of adult learning provide a solid basis for assisting rural librarians. Again, it must be emphasized that library educators should not be expected to take on the full responsibility; it must be a shared function if success is to be expected.

Some Procedural Implications

If any plan for library service adjustment is to succeed, the consent and support of persons of influence must be won. State library agency personnel, systems directors, trustees, local librarians, and patrons all play important roles—which will vary in different political environments—in the implementation of an instrument like the Guide. The utility of the plan, the reason for doing what is to be done, and the "so what?" have to be understood by those concerned with execution and outcomes.

Regardless of the apparent success or failure of the various acronymed approaches to it, systematic program planning is essential for all types of libraries if they are to compete for scarce discretionary funds. The approach must be conceptually sound, yet take into account the fact that many small library operations cannot afford the luxury of large expenditures of personnel or of time to deal with jargon-riddled instructions, and then complete a complex and sophisticated planning process. At the same time, however, librarians who serve in rural areas, even those who serve part-time, must be convinced that careful planning for services and resource allocation is not "busy work" or merely a bureaucratic chore, but a way to achieve optimum utilization of limited resources and a method by which they may communicate the need for additional resources to their funding agencies.
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No planning system is intended to be more than a basis on which effective library programs may be built. Sometimes those who attempt to promulgate or implement such plans lose sight of that purpose and become entranced with the process, thus committing more resources to planning than are necessary. Whey they do, many librarians begin to doubt the credibility of any planning process, and they insist that they already have more to do than they can get done in the time they have.

During the study team's field work and testing, it became obvious that practically all of those serving in rural libraries wanted to do the best job they could and were sincerely concerned for the communities in which they worked. No amount of caring or concern can replace needed library skills; likewise, skills acquisition by the indifferent will not produce desirable outcomes. The point to be made is that there is a group of persons serving others who need answers to complex questions.

Personnel who sponsor a plan or who give instructions in its implementation must sell softly and convincingly, but not abrasively. The personal dimension of the planning process must be taken into account. The study team talked with a number of local librarians and systems personnel who had been exposed to excellent plans introduced by people who were arrogant, impatient with understandings perceived to be inferior to their own, and just poor teachers. That dooms a plan, especially in rural areas where fierce local pride must never be challenged by insensitive and naïve outsiders.

Persons interested in improving rural library service must understand that appraising the needs of anyone and developing a strategy for addressing them is not just a library problem that requires a grasp of the traditional techniques of the trade. The issue has economic, educational, social and political aspects as well. The complexities of the task could easily overwhelm those who are unprepared for the constraints and roadblocks that spring from so many sources.

Conditions of competition among some public agencies for the same job and lack of coordination among some agencies with similar or related responsibilities compound the problems of would-be change agents. Planners must find a way to catalyze and coordinate efforts to meet rural information needs.

When asked about needs and problems, most rural library personnel respond with references to lack of money, lack of staff, lack of time, poor transportation, and isolation. Planners who would work with people who voice those kinds of concerns had better be prepared to demonstrate how their plans are going to address those specific prob-
lems. Librarians in rural service must be convinced that community analysis, needs identification, program development, and evaluation are going to lead to increased public awareness and support for the library, and, most importantly, to determination on the part of funders to support the library adequately.

Unfortunately, too many of us mistakenly believe we know what the problems are. Too many of us really believe we know a community simply because we live and work in it and, through osmosis, learn the needs of its people. We fantasize that all small communities are about the same, just as we are sure that all big cities are about the same and share the same basic characteristics and problems. It is important to repeat that we must de-mythologize views of rural conditions and replace intuitive and impressionistic views with an understanding of real conditions. Librarians and educators are going to have to do some unlearning, some unfreezing of assumptions, if they are even to understand rural problems. And understanding is just the first step.

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The Impact of Technology and Networks on the Future of Rural Public Library Service

WILLIAM T. DEJOHN

The purpose of this article is to discuss the impact of technology and networks on the future of rural public library service, and to describe how this impact will improve the quality and accessibility of service to the rural library patron.1

John W. Head in a summary article on rural public libraries in the 1979 ALA Yearbook stated that: "A great many rural libraries are weak in both staff and collection. Many function without trained staff and have materials budgets that while never adequate, are now falling further short because of increased book and periodical costs. There are some fine libraries in rural areas, but the great majority are correctly perceived by the community as weak, minor community resources."2 Based on this assessment, technology and networking, in order to have an impact of any consequence, would seem to face an uphill battle. However, there is no need to count out the rural public library if a commitment to information services can be developed within the community. It may necessitate a reorientation of thinking, away from the negative images of "small" and "weak" toward one of fulfilling community information needs and expectations through access to resources using current and potential technological and networking developments.

Technology and networking will change service patterns and create new potentials for improved rural public library service. Since large library collections and highly trained staff are not typical of rural

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public libraries, this seeming weakness will have to be transformed into a position of strength by providing access, directly or indirectly, to larger resources and trained staff.

In order to take advantage of new technological developments and networking potentials, the small rural public library must prove to the community that it is a viable community resource, important to the life of the community and worthy of support. Information services will have to be improved and further developed, and fears of losing local autonomy put aside. Through joining with larger units of library service, either as cooperative members or as full administrative members, rural libraries can improve services and provide access to new technologies and networking.

It is the premise of this paper that technology and networks are not problems to be overcome, but potentials to improve rural public library services. These two developments can help the rural library to become an information center for the community. In order for this to happen, however, closer ties with the local government and business must be formed and possibly take precedence over the recreational and educational functions libraries strive for but seldom achieve in small rural communities.

**Rural Public Libraries Defined**

Rural public libraries may be defined in two ways: (1) according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census definition of rural as “places of less than 2500 population and outside of urbanized areas,” as used by Weech elsewhere in this issue; or (2) small public libraries in a rural setting, defined here as being not just outside urbanized areas, but at least a half or full day’s drive from an urbanized area. The populations of these areas vary and 1970 populations for cities will be used in this article. For example, Glasgow, Montana, has a population of 4700, so would not fall within the Census Bureau’s definition of rural—but it is a full day’s drive from its closest urbanized area (Billings, Montana). Thus, for purposes of this article, its library is considered to be a public library in a rural setting. In some cases, the population of such communities will be even greater than 4700.

A person’s perception of “rural” depends much on his or her living experience. Those who grew up in the Midwest have little appreciation for the rural areas in the West and Northwest. Anyone studying a map of Montana or Alaska would see immediately that in some cases it is
impossible to get “there from here” without a lot of imagination. Librarians in these faraway rural areas have difficult distance problems to contend with, even in attending a meeting in their own state or region. The Pacific Northwest (including Alaska, British Columbia, Alberta, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Washington) covers 1,603,820 square miles and has approximately 12 million people. This can be compared to Illinois’s 11 million people and 56,400 square miles. Planners and developers for rural library service need to consider the Rocky Mountain and western regions as well as the Midwest, Appalachian, and the South.

**Networks Defined**

There are currently many interpretations of the word *network*. Joseph Becker’s definition and list of kinds of networks will be used here to describe opportunities for rural libraries: a network exists “when two or more libraries engage formally in a common pattern of information exchange, through communications, for some functionally interdependent purpose.” The reader’s knowledge of rural libraries should be related to these kinds of networks.

Networks are perceived from many points of view such as:

- by signals carried:
  - digital network
  - video network
  - analog network
  - communications network

- by logical structure:
  - star or centralized network
  - decentralized network
  - distributive network
  - hierarchical network

- by institutional focus:
  - public library network
  - academic library network
  - special library network
  - intertype network

- by function:
  - cataloging network
  - bibliographic network

  - interlibrary loan network
  - reference information network

- by subject:
  - medical information network
  - agricultural information network
  - energy information network

- by equipment:
  - teletype network
  - telephone network
  - radio network
  - television network
  - computer network

- by geographic area:
  - statewide network
  - regional network [in-state]
  - multi-state network
  - national network
  - international network

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Rural public libraries, like medium-sized, large, and urban libraries of all types, can belong to several different types of networks listed above.

**Technology**

The NCLIS program document *Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action* states that "libraries are affected by four new technologies: computers, micrographics, telecommunications, and audio-visual media." This article will focus on these four areas and comment on technologies ranging from simple telecommunication devices (like the telephone) to satellite transmission and how rural libraries will be impacted.

**Networking**

Many state library agencies have established statewide resource-sharing networks that, related to Becker's list, fall into several patterns. Rural public libraries are usually eligible to participate in a number of these patterns if they wish. Such participation depends upon staffing, hours of operation, equipment available, etc. Networks can be organized on the basis of:

1. **structure**—usually hierarchical, with rural public libraries accessing a local cooperative system or nearby resource library, usually a large public library, for the first contact outside the community. In some cases, as in South Dakota, libraries will contact the state library directly.
2. **institution**—usually public, increasingly, however, an intertype network is involved, giving the rural public library access to materials held in academic, school, and/or special library collections.
3. **function**—cataloging, bibliographic, interlibrary loan, and reference. The rural public library could be involved in a processing center for cataloging and a bibliographic network such as OCLC or WLN, in addition to basic reference and interlibrary loan networks.
4. **equipment**—usually IN-WATS phone and/or teletype machines.
5. **geography**—usually regional (in-state) and multistate.

Rural public libraries can be found to be involved in all of the above to one degree or another. However, some rural libraries are not involved in any of the above for reasons relating to attitude, staffing, funding, and/or lack of support within the community and board of trustees. One seldom knows to what degree lack of support is actually lack of
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understanding of the options and potentials available.

State library agencies are mandated to serve the entire state. This means that rural public libraries have direct access to whatever collection a state library agency has available. Other collections are also available depending upon the statewide development program to utilize large public and academic library collections. This access to larger collections by the rural public library can be by phone or mail. When the rural public library is serving as headquarters for a cooperative system of some sort, it is usually connected to telecommunications, such as a teletypewriter, or to an on-line terminal such as OCLC (e.g., Oklahoma).

Information on rural public libraries belonging to cooperative systems is plentiful, though not always easy to find in the literature. This information is readily accessible through newsletters from state library agencies or from various cooperatives. The ASLA Report on Interlibrary Cooperation 1978 combined with the American Library Directory can quickly reveal whether a rural library belongs to some network, consortia, or cooperative. Examples are plentiful in Illinois, Minnesota, Washington, Montana, etc.

The concept of networking applied to rural public libraries and cooperative systems can contribute much in the long run to the improvement of the quality and accessibility of service to the rural resident. For example, the Spokane (Washington) Public Library has been carrying out an LSCA project funded by the Washington State Library to provide interlibrary loan and reference referral services to four adjacent counties which have very small libraries. Such services have been provided through use of the SCAN (State Controlled Area Network) and IN-WATS telephone systems. This has made it possible for Spokane Public Library's reference staff to telephone the smaller libraries weekly to take interlibrary loan and reference questions. It has also made it possible for the rural libraries to call the Spokane Public Library when patrons have a rush request. Guidelines have also been prepared so that patrons may call the Spokane Public Library directly for service, enabling reference interviews to serve the patron better. The populations served by some of these community libraries are quite small. Examples are Davenport (1520), Harrington (510), Edwald (110), Odessa (1115), and Ione (575). During planning for the service, one library assistant indicated that her library was open only one day per week and the rest of the time she took calls at her home. Her toll-free number was occasionally helpful in fulfilling urgent requests; materials could be sent directly to the patron's home.
The lack of staff, resources, adequate hours, and equipment can be major obstacles to a rural public library's ability to offer any type of service. And yet, libraries by any definition exist in rural America. While a population category of 10,000 is admittedly rather high for the rural library as defined here, the 1978 *Bowker Annual* noted that: “of libraries serving 10,000 or less persons, 46.1 percent were open less than 20 hours per week….Over half (55.6 percent) of all public libraries were open six days per week for at least two hours per day. There appeared to be a relationship between the population served by the library and the number of days the library was open two hours or more.”

With such situations common in rural settings, it seems that making it possible for a user to call a distant library directly would be one way around such problems. Support by state and local funds is needed in order for a nearby library with substantial collections and staffs to provide such services.

One possibility is actually to employ a trained staff member to be the main contact for the community rather than trying to develop a building with books. The capital expenditures for starting a library are quite high. Proportionately, it would cost less to offer services immediately using existing technologies. This would be comparable to a state library agency placing a “reference” desk in the capitol building during legislative sessions to be directly accessible to legislators and staffs. Why couldn't this work in rural America? A trained staff member, a telephone, and a terminal could access much information if planned correctly. This does not answer the recreational and educational needs of that community, but it is the writer's contention that a whole new philosophy must be used in providing library services to rural communities. An immediate information service provided locally to the business and farm communities might foster stronger commitment for local library development in the future. The local county extension agent may be a model for librarians to take seriously.

Small libraries in the Minnesota towns of Comfrey (525), Elmore (910), and LeSueur (3745), to name only a few, are members of the Traverse des Sioux Library System and have access to the Southcentral Minnesota Inter-Library Exchange (SMILE). According to information from SMILE:

This six-year-old cooperative group has had many successful intertype library projects which greatly expand the information resources available to area library users and information seekers.
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The library borrower’s card issued by the thirty-seven Traverse des Sioux Library System member public libraries and branches in the nine-county area can be used to borrow books in any SMILE member library. The small Bethany Lutheran College Library issues its students the Traverse des Sioux card, in lieu of its own card, so that Bethany students will have convenient access to the Mankato State University (MSU) collection, as well as the Mankato Public Library without triple registration. Area residents who don’t have the Traverse des Sioux cards can apply for the card at the academic library when they go to it to borrow books.

A book or periodical borrowed from any SMILE member library can be returned to any other member library or branch. A book or periodical request by any public library patron, or Dr. Martin Luther College user, is teletyped to the Mankato State University Library, or other appropriate SMILE member library, before it is transmitted to the Minnesota Interlibrary Loan Network in St. Paul or to MINITEX (Minnesota Interlibrary Telecommunications Exchange).

A courier delivery van, owned by Traverse des Sioux, drives five 200-mile circuits of the nine-county area each week. Public libraries and academic libraries alike, receive from once-a-week to twice-a-day delivery of library materials through this service. All materials requested by the academic libraries through MINITEX are sent by Greyhound to the Mankato bus station where the courier stops twice a day to pick up and send boxes to the MINITEX office at the University of Minnesota. Public library requests for periodicals not found in our own area are also supplied through MINITEX.

Traverse des Sioux has employed a public library reference librarian to provide backup for reference and information referrals from member public libraries. This regional reference coordination is located in the Reference Department of the Mankato State University Library, the largest resource collection in our area. She works one-quarter time for MSU in exchange for use of desk, floor space, and immediate access to an outstanding reference department. She and a half-time assistant also search the MSU book collection for interlibrary loan requests teletyped by the Traverse des Sioux Library assistant located in the Mankato Public Library....
The University of Minnesota Technical College, Waseca's Learning Resources Center, is the information backup for agricultural-related requests. Mankato State University is a federal depository library, but it sends all agricultural documents on to the University of Minnesota Technical College, Waseca.10

This is but an example, and not unique at that, of local libraries of various types, including small rural public libraries, joining to form cooperatives and systems and providing what Becker referred to as "functionally interdependent purpose[s]." Similar examples can be found in all Illinois library systems as well as in most states with cooperatives developed, be they single- or multi-type.

Most of these examples relate to interlibrary loan and reference services. Many system headquarters also employ consultants to work with local library staff members and to provide workshops and various continuing education opportunities.

A recent example incorporating system cooperation philosophy, resource-sharing, OCLC bibliographic network, and small libraries in rural settings is the Illinois Valley Library System (IVLS) in Peoria, Illinois. Long a front-runner in developing local projects to increase user access to information and materials, this system recently received approval to implement an experimental project called "Sharing Resources—Materials/Information, Bibliographic Data and Staff" which will receive LSCA funds from the Illinois State Library. The three-year project is funded at $519,418 and will provide IVLS and other Illinois libraries with viable options for the development and utilization of computerized on-line bibliographic systems to assure citizens improved access to resources:

The project provides for the application of controlled processes to determine if OCLC, Inc., can be utilized by libraries in cost-effective, user-beneficial ways not now possible through the more traditional approaches to data processing applications or through the manual techniques currently being used by libraries.

The controlled processes will include: (1) grouping libraries of various types and sizes in clusters to test methods of sharing terminals or access to the terminals; (2) sharing personnel to provide enhanced customized cataloging within clusters; and (3) sharing personnel and terminals to provide user access to a wider range of resources otherwise not available.
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The goal of this project is to determine the cost-effectiveness and user benefit for the libraries/information centers of the Illinois Valley Library System in their application of the products and processes which compose the elements of the OCLC on-line data base. For IVLS, access to the OCLC data base, consisting of more than 5 million records in more than 1200 libraries throughout the country, is definitely improving access to information on where material is located. The OCLC-ILL subsystem is making it possible for the local libraries to request loans from each other by using the OCLC terminal. The actual delivery of the material is handled by a van delivery system that criss-crosses central Illinois and connects with OCLC libraries in Bloomington, Springfield, and with the University of Illinois.

Many rural public libraries have access to on-line data bases through their cooperative system headquarters, local universities, or state library agencies. In Montana, for example, the state library offers access to data bases on Lockheed and SDC. The reference staff handles all questions and determines if a search is necessary. Training sessions were conducted in all Montana federations in order to help local library staff members conduct proper reference interviews with the user. Small rural libraries are members of these federations. When necessary, the state library staff can query the patron directly. Again, through networking and technology, the resident of a small community can have access to information not available in his or her local library. Furthermore, through a system of networking in the Pacific Northwest, all types of libraries cooperate within a multistate region. A resident can receive material that is not available in Montana, but located, for example, at the University of Washington, the Oregon State University Library, or even the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

The Alaska Library Network has three regional centers: the Alaska State Library in Juneau (southeast region), the Fairbanks North Star Borough Library in Fairbanks (northern region), and the Z.J. Loussac Public Library in Anchorage (southcentral region). The Fairbanks North Star Borough Library covers the northern region which includes Nome, Arctic Village, and Kotzebue, and in most cases receives requests by mail or phone since there are few roads in the northern region of Alaska. This library, serving a city population of 14,771, has the CLSI automated circulation system and uses a portable unit on its bookmobile. A quotation from a recent article on “Driving a Bookmobile in Alaska” serves to illustrate what technology can bring to rural areas:
Operating out of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Public Library, the present bookmobile is an eleven-ton truck with standard transmissions, a generator for lights, and a propane heating system.... The interior is equipped with slanted shelves, a check-out desk, and just enough room for a third-grade class.... Books are checked out by computer when the bookmobile returns from a stop.... Any neighborhood or community with enough interest may request a bookmobile stop, although priority is given to outlying areas where it is more difficult for patrons to make use of the main facility in Fairbanks. The bookmobile stops at several senior citizen homes, two outlying schools during the school year, and a miscellany of communities and neighborhoods. During the summer of 1978, we travelled to McKinley Park, stopping at various small towns along the way. It proved to be a very popular service, and the length of the drive necessitated a night spent in McKinley Park on the floor of the bookmobile. After a quick breakfast and a splash in a nearby creek, we were ready for an early morning stop at the ranger station. Stops at Healy (79) and Anderson (362), then the return trip to Fairbanks completed our two days of driving.12

The North Central Regional Library District located in Wenatchee, Washington, serves a population of 139,723 in an area covering approximately 14,951 libraries with 24 branches. North Central is a participant in the Washington Library Network and began adding its current acquisitions to the system in 1970.

The WLN Resource Directory is a microfiche union catalog containing library holdings added by the WLN participants to its computer system. The holdings of approximately eighty libraries are now being entered into the WLN computer system and the Resource Directory on an ongoing basis. The Resource Directory has almost 400,000 records with more than 1.1 million local call numbers.

North Central has used the WLN Resource Directory as its catalog for approximately 53 percent of its holdings added since 1979. The twenty-four branches and their staffs and patrons have had access to the WLN Resource Directory and have been able to search for information by title, author, and subject. Located material could be requested through interlibrary loan throughout the state and from other participating libraries outside Washington. These small communities in the North Central Regional Library District receive the directory on a regular basis. The use of microfiche readers has further brought micro-
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graphic technology to small local communities. North Central's use of the WLN computer system on-line gives its staff the ability to search a major bibliographic data base as well as to take part in shared cataloging activities. North Central is now in the process of providing their branches with customized catalogs, that is, catalogs of only the holdings of North Central. Major branches and headquarters will have both the WLN Resource Directory and the customized North Central microfiche catalogs.

The tying together of libraries in Alaska (Fairbanks, Anchorage, Juneau) with libraries in Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon has assisted in making each other's holdings available for shared cataloging and sharing of resources in a much-improved way. Previously, such access was only through the Union Catalog of the Pacific Northwest Bibliographic Center located in Seattle at the University of Washington. The Union Catalog is still a viable tool and is being used daily since only one-half of the holding libraries are members of the WLN computer system and many still do not have their retrospective holdings in the system. The Union Catalog dates back to 1940.

Technology's Future Impact

The future impact of technology on rural public libraries will obviously depend on whether or not the technology is used by rural libraries. Even though some staffs are committed to trying new approaches to service, many are not. The issue of funding, especially as it relates to property taxes, is not being addressed in this article. However, heavy use of technology over and above the telephone brings up a funding aspect that few very small rural libraries can handle. It is for this reason that community involvement is essential, especially among the business and local government officials. They must assimilate exactly what the new technological developments can do in the way of providing current information services to assist them in decision-making.

Several technological developments have appeared lately in the literature that will impact rural public libraries, providing greater accessibility to information. The National Science Foundation and Texas Instruments have made it possible for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Advisory Committee and staff to communicate with each other by computer. The computer conferencing project is conducted through the Electronic Information Exchange System, which is an NSF-funded R&D project at the New Jersey Insti-
tute of Technology exploring what type of communications capabilities computers can give human beings. How can this technique be transferred to a rural library setting? It could tie local libraries with cooperative system headquarters. Patrons could make inquiries directly on-line and speak to trained staff in other libraries. Such devices would enhance tenfold the ability of a rural public library to increase communication for its own community.

In Alaska a proposal has been discussed, though not funded, to set up community information centers in small communities in remote locations throughout that vast state. The concept is far-reaching and may be readily transferable to many small communities in America. The following is taken from a three-page preliminary proposal outlining it:

Establish a facility in the community to be used as a resource center. This area would be equipped with the necessary equipment to allow for the reception and delivery of information and programming in many formats such as video, with or without audio feedback, video with computer interaction and audio feedback, or an audio and computer interaction, or just two-way audio or computer-assisted instruction. Encyclopedias, journals, and other printed references would be available. In essence, the CIC is, among other things, a community library which has the capability to obtain information from other places through the satellite link.

If a person desired information that could not be provided by the local library, the computer terminal could be used to access the holdings of libraries on the system, state or national. If the material in the library is in computer storage, it could be read on the CRT of the computer terminal, printed out if desired, or the full document could be ordered if appropriate. Delivery could be by mail or by high-speed facsimile.

The centers would be available to personnel from federal, state, and native agencies throughout the state. It would be possible for them to send and receive information that pertains to their job activities. Village corporations could utilize computer-based management information systems. It should be possible for private firms to utilize the system for their bookkeeping needs.

The feasibility of the CIC concept will be determined largely by economic factors. In the manner that aggregating many users for a satellite channel can lower the per-user cost to a
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reasonable level, the cost of terminal equipment might be affordable if shared by many.14

The Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT) has recently asked the FCC for permission to broadcast pay-television directly to American homes via satellite in 1983. COMSAT plans to use inexpensive receiving dishes currently being tested in Japan. This new service appears to be distance-insensitive and capable of being delivered to any individual anywhere. Programming would include first-run movies, sports, and educational and cultural material, as well as data and text transmission. Costs to the subscribers are projected to be between $15 and $22.50 per month.15

Whether such broadcasting will bypass the rural public library and make its service obsolete depends upon whether the rural library and/or large cooperative systems develop proposals and service programs to complement such a development. The fact that it is coming is clear. When it is coming is even being projected. It is up to local librarians to plan in preparation for it. The newly published Public Library Mission Statement and its imperatives for service quite clearly state: “Traditional library buildings should be considered as only one way to deliver library service. Innovative systems should be designed to deliver library services through a full range of physical and electronic means to the places where people live and work.”16

The burden of assisting small rural public libraries falls heavily on state library agencies even when cooperative library systems are already in place. The amount of staff expertise in the telecommunications area in libraries is not great. However, the regional automated library networks that have personnel with background in telecommunications, as well as OCLC, WLN, and RLIN, could be of great benefit to state librarians and local library planners.

Recently, home delivery of library services was demonstrated in Columbus, Ohio, with the joint production of a project by the Public Library of Columbus and Franklin County, OCLC, and QUBE, a two-way cable television system. The program enabled viewers at home and the studio audience to participate in discussions on current best-sellers. OCLC originated the idea of the Home Book Club and this project shows a cooperative venture between cable television, local libraries, and a major nationwide bibliographic utility.17 Can this be transferred to rural areas? There are few who would doubt from a technological standpoint that it could, but the ability of local libraries to handle the increased service load would be a major question. Again,
staffing, hours of service, and local funding bring reality to bear on the problems.

The August 1979 issue of Advanced Technology Libraries has rather complete information on videotext news in Canada and the United States. For example, the Manitoba Telephone System has announced that its Project Ida will offer home access to computerized data banks via television as part of a special telecommunications project in a rural section of the province. Manitoba covers over 251,000 square miles. Project Ida has more than twenty companies interested in acting as sources for information, including several Winnipeg newspapers, the Toronto Star, the Southam Press, and Home Information, Inc. Manitoba Telephone System indicates that library services, electronic mail, yellow pages, interactive “video school,” and teleshopping are among the possible uses for Ida.\(^8\)

In an article in Special Libraries, Rosa Liu of COMSAT discussed the current and potential uses of satellites in libraries. According to her, “the full market potential of communications satellites in providing library services is not generally known, and librarians are not aware of the improvements that satellites can offer.”\(^9\) Unfortunately, probably few rural librarians receive and read Special Libraries closely and the article is likely to be overlooked.

A viewdata-type delivery system sponsored by the U.S. government promises better agricultural weather information for the nation’s farmers and is described in the March 1979 issue of Information World. (In the author’s opinion, Information World is must reading by librarians and is on a nontechnical level.) According to the article: “The green thumb box is the key to the agricultural weather dissemination system....By connecting the antenna of the farmer’s home television set to his telephone line, the box effectively turns the TV into a computer terminal.”\(^10\) The difference between this approach and the British viewdata system is that the British system is interactive while “green thumb” is not. The green thumb boxes could, however, have the capability of permitting farmers to talk to the computer and to each other.

One of the keys to improving rural library services is a strong link with the USDA’s County Extension Service so that as technological developments get underway, library services will be brought into the picture at an early stage and the local business community, and especially the farmers, become accustomed to having the library connected with developments in rural areas. To say that rural library services need a huge marketing effort would be an understatement.
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Conclusion

This has been a brief overview of some of the technological developments which relate to rural library services and will inherently change library services for rural residents. Technology will open new possibilities and a new dimension for rural library service, increasing accessibility of information for rural library patrons, many of whom are sophisticated professionals and blue-collar workers taking employment positions in rural areas and demanding levels of service they were used to in urban and college communities. The developments that will be occurring could give users of rural libraries more equal access to library and information resources than they could previously have hoped for.

Several problems lie ahead for rural public libraries. Some of these problems have been mentioned: staffing, funding, hours of service, etc. These can be seen as opportunities to develop services that coincide with the type of services the communities will be receiving outside the library field. Examples include video, cable television with interactive elements, and the "green thumb" experiments. If libraries are not involved during the initial planning phases, it will be extremely difficult to bring them in at a later time. In early stages they may have access to start-up grant funds, which would not be the case at a later stage.

The challenge for rural library planners is at least to keep up with technological developments, have intimate knowledge of community issues, and know community planners and decision-makers. There is no doubt that networking and technology will impact the future of rural library service. The question is whether rural libraries will take part in the developing technologies reaching out to the rural communities or be replaced as these technologies begin to provide current information at lower costs to the community. The traditional library service patterns may not work in the next fifty years, and librarians will have to be sure that their thinking and planning takes into account what is going to be, not just what has been.

References

1. The author gratefully acknowledges the advice and assistance of Bridget Lamont, Associate Director for Library Development, Illinois State Library, in the preparation of this paper.
2. Ibid., pp. 86-87.
Acronyms

ADC—Aid to Dependent Children
ALA—American Library Association
BBM—Books-by-Mail
CIC—Community Information Center
CLSI—Computer Library Services, Inc.
COMSAT—Communications Satellite Corporation
CRT—Cathode Ray Tube
ESEA—Elementary and Secondary Education Act
FCC—Federal Communications Commission
FY—Fiscal Year
ILL—Interlibrary Loan
INCOLSA—Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority
IN-WATS—Inward Wide Area Telephone Service
IVLS—Illinois Valley Library System
LSA—Library Services Act
LSCA—Library Services and Construction Act
MAB—Mail-a-Book
MINITEX—Minnesota Interlibrary Telecommunications Exchange
MSU—Mankato State University
NCLIS—National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
NEA—National Education Association
NEH—National Endowment for the Humanities
NSF—National Science Foundation
OCLC—Ohio College Library Center
OLSD—Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged
R&D—Research and Development
RLIN—Research Libraries Information Network
SDC—System Development Corporation
SIC—Survival Information Center
SMILE—South-central Minnesota Interlibrary Exchange
SMSA—Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area
TIP—The Information Place
TVA—Tennessee Valley Authority
USDA—United States Department of Agriculture
USOE—United States Office of Education
WLN—Washington Library Network
WPA—Works Progress Administration
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*A complete list of back issues is available from *Library Trends*, Publications Office, 249 Armory Building, University of Illinois, Champaign, Ill. 61820.

†Also available in clothbound editions.
Library Trends

Forthcoming numbers are as follows:


Fall 1980, *Library Services to Ethnocultural Minorities*. Editor: Leonard Wertheimer, Languages Coordinator, Metropolitan Toronto Library Board.
